**MAROONED** by **RICHARD HOWELLS WATKINS**

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September, 1948 Vol. 119, No. 5

## THE NOVELETTE

**Marooned**..... RICHARD HOWELLS WATKINS 8
When the *Arcturus* hove alongside the *Bernelle* in the treacherous shallows of the Great Bahama Bank, Gil Wilcox knew there was something evil in the wind. After all, marine biologists or friendly fishing parties just don't spray each other with machine-gun fire as soon as their craft nudge topsides.

## SHORT STORIES

**The Long Roll**..... C. HALL THOMPSON 38
The kill-crazy Cheyenne on their paint ponies poured down on the sleeping troopers out of the October sunup, and every man in the detachment knew his only hope of salvation lay in the rolling summons of a phantom drum.

**Four Blind Men**..... FREDRIC BROWN 46
The ringmaster was a guy anybody in the circus would have enjoyed killing. Even the animals hated him. So, from among all those potential murderers—two-footed as well as four—it was quite a problem to pick the culprit who'd stilled his cracking whip forever.

**The Honorable Missing Pyramid**..... JAMES NORMAN 52
When Captain Frazier of Counter Intelligence arrived in Sianfu on Sweeping Graves Day he never expected to violate the three thousand Chinese rules of behavior and ceremony all at one fell sweep.

**Jackass**..... HAL G. EVARTS 62
Sam Durfee, that old desert rat, had lived seventy-eight years with only his burro for company and he'd be damned if a windfall of $70,000 was going to make any difference in the privacy of his young life now.

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## OUT ON SEPTEMBER 10TH ◆ ◆ ◆


**Periscope Patrol**.....ALEC HUDSON 94
When a gunnery officer has as good an opinion of himself as did Lieutenant Smith of the sub *Sailfin*, two months is a long time to have to cruise around in actionless seas waiting for him to get his chance to shoot up or shut up.

**Of Vice and Virtue**.....F. R. BUCKLEY 102
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**The Devil's Left Tusk (3rd of 4 parts)**..... ROBINSON MacLEAN 72
Malcolm Murphy, disguised as an Ethiopian holy man, arrives finally at the Blue Nile just in time to encounter a caravan of foreign adventurers among whose polyglot company he is certain rides the murderer of his brother Matt.

### THE FACT STORY

**Handguns of Glory**.....CHARLES EDWARD CHAPEL 117
From Pilgrim days right down through history to World War II, pistols and revolvers in the hands of fighting Americans have played a decisive roll in winning and holding our liberty. Here they all are—the martial weapons of our battle glory.

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*Cover painted for* Adventure *by Robert Stanley*
*Kenneth S. White, Editor*


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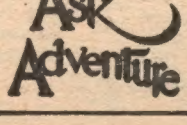

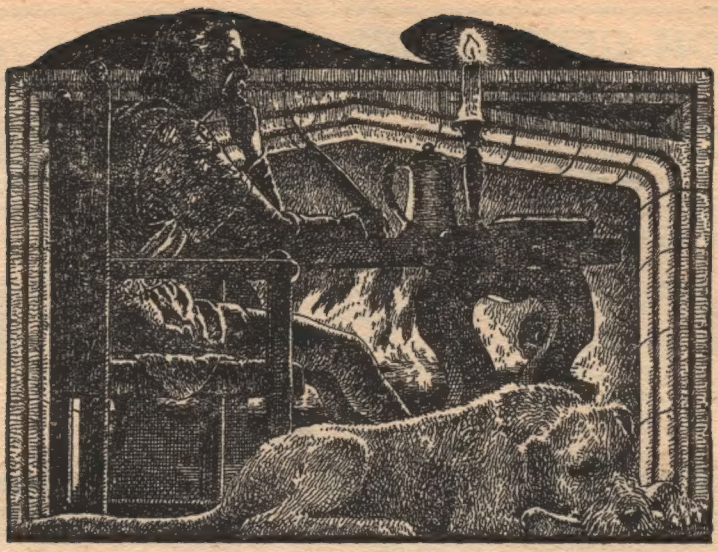

# THE CAMP-FIRE

***Where Readers, Writers and Adventurers Meet***

TO ACCOMPANY his new Caradosso story on page 102 this month, F. R. Buckley sends along the following succinct comments contrasting the age in which his hero operated and our own—

Sometimes when I wake up in the night—especially after *langouste*, which is like lobster but more vengeful—I still wonder what ADVENTURE readers think of Captain Caradosso's morals and whether by any chance they confuse them with my own! Because that would be ghastly. Luigi lived in an age when people did rough things and talked about them with the innocence of children; whereas (since we learned to call starvation, for instance, "malnutrition") we don't talk innocently any more. The things we do, if one can judge by the daily papers, are much worse than Caradosso ever dreamed of. By "we" of course I mean humanity at large, not any particular nation.

To judge how far we've advanced in the last four hundred years, consider this incident, chronicled by Sozzini, from a siege of Siena in the sixteenth century—original of the one to which Fra Matteo alludes in "'Of Vice and Virtue." When food was getting low, four officials—the *Quattro sopra le boccha disutili*—were appointed to expel "useless mouths" from the city; they drove out about a thousand persons, mostly women and children "at nightfall, weeping with sorrow and terror." I need hardly say that the besieging army was not commanded by Captain Caradosso, so that we will not go into the fate of those women. Three weeks later, seven hundred more were expelled and then two hundred and fifty little children. These last, escorted by soldiers, "fell into an ambush where most of them were slaughtered and the rest driven back toward the city. And the next morning the survivors were outside the Porte Fontebrana, all lying on the ground with the greatest outcries and lamentations. It was a most pitiful sight to see those little children, wounded and beaten, lying on the ground, and would have made a Nero weep. And I would have payed xxv scudi not to have seen them, for for three days I could neither eat nor drink anything that did me good."

On another occasion, four thousand four hundred "useless mouths" were expelled, the enemy driving them back to the foot of the city walls "so that they might the sooner consume the little bread we had left and to see if the city out of compassion to these miserable creatures would revolt. But that prevailed nothing, though they lay eight days in this condition where they had nothing to eat but herbs and grass and above three quarters of them perished and their bodies were devoured by birds and starving dogs who oft returned to the city with skulls or bones."

The chronicler does not say how much he would have given not to see *this* spectacle; but it is evident that the allegedly tough sixteenth-century stomach turned more easily than most stomachs do nowadays. All

*(Continued on page 135)*

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# MAROONED

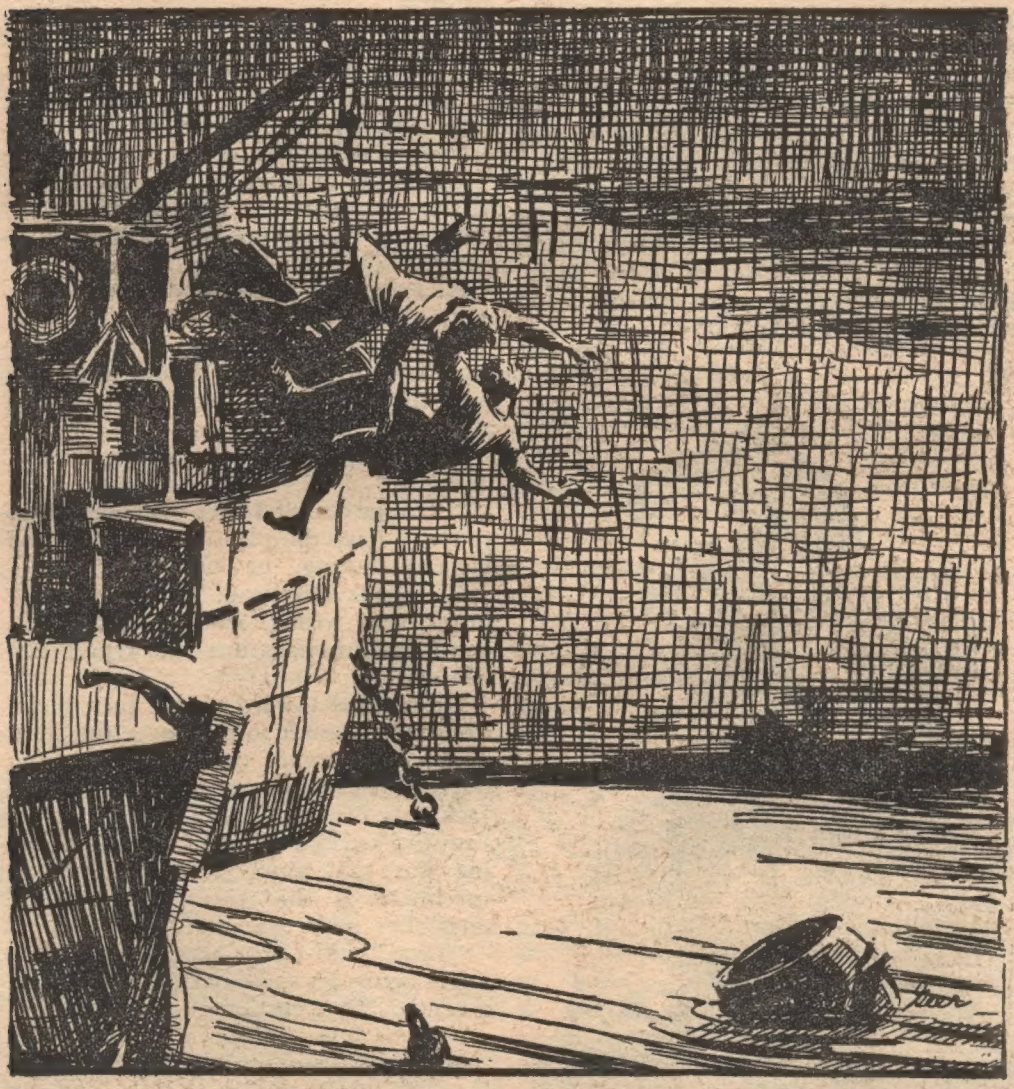
ILLUSTRATED BY CHARLES GEER

## By RICHARD HOWELLS WATKINS

THE small motor cruiser had now put astern the deep and purple Gulf Stream. Five of the six men crowding her bridge deck stared around at the light green and yellow shallows of Great Bahama Bank, that strange wide world of shoal water. It was utterly deserted.

The sixth man, Gil Wilcox, steered carefully enough but found a moment to turn an alert gray eye on the slight figure and immobile face of Mario Lorca. The olive countenance of the well-spoken gentleman who had chartered Gil's boat for this run from Key West to the Bank seemed as placid as a cow's aunt. Nevertheless Mario Lorca was tightening up, as if a twisting turnbuckle were stretching taut every nerve in him.

Lorca was instantly aware of Gil Wil-



*He whipped an arm around the neck of his enemy as he toppled into the sea.*

cox's scrutiny. He lowered his binoculars and smiled most brilliantly.

"The ship is still there, Captain. You have made excellent time."

Book-learned, this *señor's* English. And every word was accurately pronounced. His voice was casual.

Gil nodded. His eyes squinted through the open screen at the sun-baked desolation of Big and Little Arido keys and the coral heads and sandbars around them. To the south of Big Arido and inside Little, squarely in among the shoals, he suddenly made out the upper part of a rusty hull, two stumpy masts and a short funnel. A ship with the rugged look of a North Sea trawler, but a good few thousand miles off base.

Involuntarily Gil's eyes leaped to the chart. Fathom markings, wide apart along the vast little-traversed Bank, showed 2, 2¼, 1¾. That old ship, though she'd not be over 120 feet long, had needed skilled piloting of the dead slow, leadline type to get that deed in on the Bank. A risky job.

*Mario Lorca*

Lorca, at Gil's shoulder, sensed his wonder. "You can pick up many strange craft in Cuba. My friend, Romanus, is a most accurate navigator."

"He didn't lug a cargo in there," Gil said. "If she wasn't light there'd be coral rubbing the barnacles off her bottom right now."

Lorca nodded. "A few supplies, chemicals, diving equipment, specimen tanks—the usual impediments of a marine biologist—is all he'd have in her, Captain."

GIL'S scrutiny focused on Lorca's two rough-hewn henchmen. Neither Storni, the tall one, nor Grosse, the fat one, had the look of a man of science, unless barroom fighting had been promoted to that category.

"A couple of extra hands I picked up in Port Matanzas to help Romanus in the diving operations," Lorca explained softly.

He raised the glasses and watched the motionless ship.

"There's a living for you in mind reading, *Señor* Lorca," Gil Wilcox said. He confronted Lorca squarely. "Now what am I thinking?"

Lorca responded with his bright, taut smile.

"Perhaps that if I ever visit Key West you will have the pleasure of taking me big game fishing," he said.

Gil shook his head. "Dead wrong—suspiciously wrong, *Señor* Lorca. I told you I deal in boats, buy 'em, repair 'em, sell 'em."

He nodded toward young Jack Field, who had gone aft to lean over the stern to see if the motor pump was throwing water. "That's my prospect. If I sell Jack this one maybe he'll fish you for sixty-five bucks a day. What I was thinking was that you'll find rare marine specimens at the Arido Keys—bashful ones that never see men."

"True," said Lorca blandly. He ran a finger across his small dark mustache like a comb. "You encourage me, Captain."

"That's fine," said Gil. He flipped a hand upward and spoke to flat-faced Sam Gerrity. "Atop the house, Sam, and con us in."

Gerrity grunted. Occasionally he said nothing but mostly too much. Now he

scooped up a leadline from a deck locker and clambered forward up onto the roof of the cabin.

Gil was no Bank pilot and he knew it. He throttled the little *Arcturus* way down and with the help of Sam's pointing arm picked the water that had the greenest tint. That seemed to work. The boat, crossing two miles of the shallow Bank, steadily raised the ship. The stubby little steamer lay in a sort of natural basin behind the low, scrubby vegetation of sandy Little Arido. She seemed practically surrounded by sandbars and shoals probably held in place by hidden limestone and coral reefs.

"A suicidal sort of place to get into with a ship that must draw nine or ten feet even when light," Gil said. "Look, *señor,* at the driftwood and storm wrack piled high above tide water on Little Arido. That September hurricane must have pasted these keys."

Lorca continued to stare at the ship.

Gingerly, with Sam Gerrity swinging the lead, Gil Wilcox worked his cruiser around the northern end of the Little Arido key which formed the seaward side of the small lagoon. Sam was getting six feet on his lead line. Coral heads made it a foul channel. Water for the *Arcturus,* but this couldn't be the way that ship entered the basin. He read her name, *Bernelle, Habana.*

A huge man with a short brown beard stood in the wing of the *Bernelle's* bridge with glasses trained on the motorboat. His gaze was steady, unhurried. He was absorbing all visible details of the *Arcturus* and her men.

"Captain Romanus," murmured Lorca. He seemed to speak to himself. The way he voiced that name made Gil Wilcox turn for another look at him. Lorca's smooth full lips had gone thin.

"Expecting somebody else?" Gil asked dryly.

Lorca did not answer. He walked, stiff-legged, to the sliding glass panel open at the side of the bridgehouse and thrust his head and shoulders out into view. He waved almost violently to the man on the *Bernelle's* bridge and his face was twisted in a broad smile of greeting.

Romanus merely continued to study the *Arcturus.* Gil's eyes quickly took in a battered steel motor lifeboat lying off

*Gil Wilcox*

the ship's quarter close to the other end of Little Arido. She was moored rigidly by two bow lines and two stern lines, set widely apart. A couple of men in her watched the *Arcturus.*

"That's a diving outfit, isn't it?" Jack Field asked Gil. "With four anchors out to hold the boat what else could it be?"

Gil assented absently and throttled down. The quiescent Captain Romanus and the active *Señor* Lorca bothered him. His eyes, when he could spare them from his course, shuttled from one to the other.

Romanus had abandoned his glasses now. He planted outstretched arms on the bridgerail and waited, a towering figure, inscrutable behind that thick brown beard.

Gil swung her to come alongside the *Bernelle's* rust-streaked quarter. Forward Sam Gerrity picked up a short length of line.

As Gil shoved the motor out of gear to make the landing Captain Romanus

bent without haste. He came up with a blue-black sub-machine gun in his hands. He braced a hip and elbow against the rail, and lowered the muzzle. The gun shook and bellowed.

STEEL-jacketed slugs ripped into the *Arcturus's* bridge deck. The suddenness of the attack made it nightmarish, mind-paralyzing.

Jack Field, beside Gil, spun half around and folded up on the deck, collapsing as grotesquely as an empty suit of clothes.

Grosse, *Señor* Lorca's fat man, was clawing the air. His neck was a red horror. He started to run, hit the deck and tumbled over.

The blare of the gun cut off.

Gil Wilcox's shoulder was burning. Desperately he jammed in the gears, gunned the motor. He saw Captain Romanus slipping another clip into the gun. The boat thrust ahead, seeming to crawl.

Sam Gerrity was gone from the bow.

Lorca scrambled up off the bridge deck floor. He had an automatic in his hand and his face was aflame with rage. He started for the shattered window, gun raised. Rage, not fear!

Romanus's second clip shook the accelerating motorboat. Gil hit Lorca behind the ear. As Lorca's knees bent Gil shoved him down on top of Jack Field. Bullets were slashing through the light framework of the boat's superstructure and ripping into her hull.

Sam Gerrity came darting aft through the cabin. A cut on his forehead hinted he had flung himself head first down the tiny fore hatch. Gil straight-armed him on the companion steps and sent him staggering back into the cabin.

*The gun shook and bellowed as steel-jacketed slugs ripped into the* Arcturus's *bridge deck.*

"Flatten!" Gil snapped. He turned the wheel slightly and sent the motorboat on, inches from the side of the ship. He curved in ahead of the *Bernelle*. Her bow and the intervening foremast with its long boom gave Romanus trouble.

From the floor of the cockpit aft Storni peered at Gil with insane eyes.

"Water comin' in!" Sam cried from below. His flat face was alive with fear. "He's smashin' her up, Gil!"

Romanus was changing clips with machine-like precision. Again he began hammering the racing boat hard He wasn't aiming at men now but throwing lead through her planking, shattering her hull Gil sensed a growing heaviness in her as she struggled on out of range.

The gun fell silent. Astern Romanus' voice roared out, hailing the moored motor lifeboat, pouring out orders in German and English.

Gil held for the northern end of Little Arido. His boat was settling, dying, bottom planking splintered and torn in a score of places. Finished. Ugly coral held him away from the yellow sand beach.

"Bring my gun, Sam, and all the ammunition," he commanded. "Port locker! Drag that raft up here."

Sam came scrambling up the companionway. Gil swung the *Arcturus* in, following the sandy key's curve until its dunes and brush concealed her from the *Bernelle's* bridge. Then he headed for the beach.

Without a warning cough the motor went dead. The *Arcturus* rolled sluggishly.

Gil lifted Lorca, still unconscious, off Jack Field with his foot. One look told him young Field was dead. Gil's face went bleak.

He left the wheel and scooped up Lorca's automatic. He walked aft with the pistol handy in his fingers and stretched an arm toward Storni.

"Let's have your gun!" he demanded.

Storni got to his knees. His lips moved soundlessly; then he shoved an automatic, twin to Lorca's, into Gil Wilcox's hand.

"Water up on the cabin floor," Sam Gerrity said, hands on the valve of the inflating raft. "Ju-das! The things I get into!"

Gil pocketed both pistols.

He picked up Jack Field, carried him below and dropped him on a bunk. He came up and closed the cabin door.

Sam was ready with the raft. Lorca, somewhat glassy-eyed, was on his feet.

"Why did you—"

"Get it over, Sam," Gil commanded. When Sam was alongside in the raft Gil hustled Storni aboard and dumped Lorca, still groggy, overside after him.

"Hustle!" Sam implored him.

Gil caught up one reserve water jug from a deck locker and stepped over into the yielding rubber of the raft. The rail of the *Arcturus* sank under his foot, as if he were pushing her down.

Sam's eyes popped. The raft spun around in swirling water. Gil turned his head. His boat was plunging under. Gone! You could see her settling to the bottom. Shoal water, but deep enough to cover the motor cruiser *Arcturus*, recently Jack Field's hope of a fine life in the sun, now his coffin.

"The poor guy!" Sam Gerrity said hoarsely. "I wouldn't say he knowed much about boats but he was figuring on learning and making sailors out o' his two kids back in Key West."

Gil nodded.

"Paddle!" he said to Sam. 'Make her move! You, Storni, paddle with your hands!"

He dug his own flimsy little blade into the sea. The raft surged sluggishly toward the nearby beach.

GIL slid over the fat gunwale of the raft into waist-deep water and towed it up onto the sand. They tumbled out. Gil hung his eyes on Storni and the reviving Lorca and told Sam to frisk them for spare clips. Each man yielded one.

Gil inspected his shoulder. A bullet had chewed a flesh wound in it. He let it bleed.

"Stay on this side of the key and keep quiet," Gil said to Lorca and Storni. "Disobey and I'll waste a couple of shots on you. Come on, Sam."

"How dare you treat me like this!" Lorca burst out. His eyes flashed. "What have I—"

"You come later," Gil said curtly. He motioned to Sam Gerrity and, running

on hard wet sand, led Sam northward up the beach. Near the end he slowed to a cautious walk, eyes alert.

"What's it all about?" Sam panted. "We taxi this Lorca an'—blam!"

"One sure bet is that Romanus doesn't intend to let any of us get away alive." Gil said. "That's enough—for now."

"That's right," said Sam glumly. The ammunition in his pockets bumped against his legs. "Ju-das! The things—"

"Romanus didn't see the *Arcturus* sink," Gil said. "He'll be rounding this end in that motor lifeboat any moment now. We'll hand him back some lead fast and try to grab his boat."

"Risky, skipper," Sam said.

Gil's laugh was sardonic. "Risky! Attack's our best chance to stay alive."

"How about the guys with him? We spray them?" Sam asked. "Ju-das! I was civilized half an hour ago."

"They saw the massacre. If they're chasing us—"

"We let 'em catch up with us, sudden, huh?" Sam finished. "That's fair—an' damn near civilized."

"It's not civilized to take murder lying down," Gil said. "They aren't letting us go call a cop."

He dropped to his hands and knees. Cautiously he began worming his way up the beach, encumbered with the roots of drowned-out sea grape clusters. He reached a point where he could see over into the lagoon. He stopped dead and Sam squirmed beside him.

There were brains as well as ruthlessness behind the brown beard of Captain Romanus.

The motor lifeboat was leaving the side of the *Bernelle* with three men in her. But she was headed for a wide swing around the southern end of this Little Arido key. Slow as the lifeboat was, Romanus reckoned she was fast enough to catch the filling *Arcturus* by a safer, round-about course. Gil's eyes narrowed in thought. He lifted his head for another look.

On the bridge of the *Bernelle* the bearded Romanus still stood, legs spread wide apart. With a quick movement he brought his glasses up to sweep the crest of Little Arido. They fixed on Gil and Sam Gerrity.

"Spotted my nob," Sam Gerrity growled, inching backward. "Look out for that tommy gun!"

Gil Wilcox lay still, studying that calm killer.

Captain Romanus grabbed no gun. He lowered the glasses, and his eyes plainly estimated the range. Then he raised a hand in a polite gesture, as if acknowledging their presence on the key.

"The gallant foeman gag," Gil said. Sam spat.

Romanus walked toward the wheelhouse. Even as as his hand reached for the whistle lanyard to signal recall to the lifeboat he paused, considering the matter without haste. He began pacing the bridge, glasses resting on his massive chest.

The lifeboat began a wide swing outside Little Arido and then, with meticulous thoroughness, circled the rocky bulk of Big Arido.

Returning, it coasted closer to Little Arido. One of the three men in her lifted an arm to point them out.

"All right, you son, look!" Sam muttered through his teeth.

But the man at the helm was ambitious. He brought his boat in closer, handling her boldly, and his two companions jerked up their hands and opened fire with automatic pistols.

Sam started for the underbrush; then stopped when Gil didn't run. The range was long for short-barrelled automatics. Gil gauged course and small seas running under the lifeboat. He lifted his own revolver. He squeezed the trigger as gently as a mother taking the thumb out of the mouth of her sleeping babe.

The fellow in the bow went back over the thwart he was braced against. He didn't come up again. Instantly the yellow-faced fellow at the tiller swung his rounded shoulders against the tiller, swerving and running seaward. Both men kept below the gunwale.

"Ju-das!" yelled Sam. "I didn't know you could shoot like that!"

"Neither did it," Gil said under his breath. He lowered his gun, in spite of Sam's urging to pour it in.

"I've got one hundred per cent," Gil said. "One shot; one man. Let it sink in."

"Well, yeah," Sam Gerrity conceded. His elation left him. "But one down ain't

much out of all they've got. And any minute now—"

"I think I'm going to like it here," Gil said firmly. He tried to sound tough and casual.

"Huh? Here?" Sam's incredulous eyes inspected Gil.

"A nice open air job," Gil said. He was uncomfortably aware he wasn't putting it over. "It'll include collecting damages for Jack Field's kids."

Sam clenched his fists and jaw but he was starting to get scared. "Collect?" he said. "How you going to—"

"That's what they call a good question on the radio," Gil said calmly. But to himself he admitted no chance of survival against a man like Romanus, completely devoid of scruples against murder and equipped with a sub-machine gun and a like-minded crew.

And what really got him down was the dream-like, unreal quality of that murderous atttack. It was like being bitten by a motor. It was like finding the law of gravity suspended. How could anybody expect a thing like that to happen in 1948? But Jack Field was dead, carried into range of that automatic weapon by his stupid friend Gil Wilcox. He remembered rigging a fishing line for Jack's older kid—little Jack—and it chilled his heart. Gil looked sideways at Sam Gerrity, who was still alive.

## CHAPTER II

### TROUBLED WATERS

SENOR Lorca and his man Storni had scooped themselves a shallow pit on the seaward beach and were lying in it with the rubber raft, rather carefully concealed from the view and bullets of the two men in the motor lifeboat.

Plainly Storni was suffering from a bad case of jitters. Lorca smiled his most brilliant smile at Gil Wilcox as Gil and Sam Gerrity came to a halt by the hole, and complimented Gil on his marksmanship. Lorca was more relaxed now than he had been when the *Arcturus* was first approaching Captain Romanus.

"I know the worst now," he explained promptly. "I have made a play and lost. There is no suspense."

"No suspense!" Sam Gerrity repeated, aghast. "Don't it suspend you any, you dirty crook, wondering how many hours you're going to stay alive?"

Gil sat down, content to listen.

"I had a hope of much money, which makes life palatable to a man, Mr. Gerrity," said Lorca. "Now that hope is gone—well, it is an unimportant step from poverty to death."

He wrinkled his smooth face and pressed a fingertip over his small mustache, right and left, as he went on in his stilted English. "But I must admit, Captain, that one small thing puzzles me. I believe I am correct in assuming that when I drew a pistol to try for a lucky shot at Romanus you struck me down? Why that, in such an emergency? Quick temper?"

"You made a shield, too late, for a decent man," Gil said. "And I wasn't choosing sides in what was only a battle of crooks. The play was to get away."

"A shield for a decent man," Lorca repeated thoughtfully. "Interesting, that. And possibly a trifle quixotic?" He went on hastily. "And, since Romanus opened fire so precipitately, you deduced that he was crooked. Further, you concluded that I must be a crook, too, since an honest man, or even some sort of policeman, would not enlist by false pretenses your services and boat to approach unwarned such a dangerous crook. A nimble mind, Captain."

"You're talking too neatly and saying too blasted little," said Gil Wilcox.

He looked without hope at the motor lifeboat making a wide detour to avoid the south end of this little key.

"Let's have it, *Señor* Lorca."

"The works," said Sam Gerrity menacingly.

"Certainly." Lorca was amiable. "Being human, Captain Wilcox and Mr. Gerrity, you have need of more money than you happen to have. *Bueno!* And I have need of more intelligent assistance" the veneer of amiability crackled slightly as his glowing eyes switched to the frightened Storni— "than I command. Together we—"

"Get to it!" Wilcox said softly.

Lorca pouted perceptibly. "Very well. I am a Spaniard, a person of some consequence, if you permit me. I am also

an adventurer, a fisher in troubled waters. During the war, you will recall, my government was not unfriendly to the Nazis, and I found myself in a position of great trust in the Nazi intelligence."

He paused and smiled with much modesty at restless Gil Wilcox. "We are doomed men, Captain. Our one slight chance is in unity. I will be frank."

He spread his arms. "Nazis eager to die on secret missions were available in great profusion but American dollars, so useful in Argentina and other parts of South America, were scarce. Nazi diehards were too easily detected; when it came to transporting precious dollars from Germany to certain gentlemen in South America I was chosen as courier and paymaster."

Gil Wilcox put up a hand. He walked to the ridge of the key, plunged through several hundred feet of thin hurricane wracked tropic bush and looked across the lagoon at the *Bernelle*.

The lifeboat was alongside and the round-shouldered man who had been at the tiller was on the bridge now, standing in front of Captain Romanus. Gil strode back.

"More speed!" he said to Lorca. "We may have visitors. Storni, get up there in cover and watch."

Storni was aghast. "Me? Suppos-in'—"

Gil took a step toward him. Storni moved.

"I will be brief," Lorca said. "A small U-boat commanded by Captain Romanus conveyed me and a sealed copper box containing approximately eight hundred thousand dollars to this key one moonless night in November, 1943."

Sam Gerrity whistled and talked to himself.

Lorca lifted a hand to indicate the southern tip of Little Arido.

"There a shrimper—a shrimp fishing vessel—was waiting for me. Unfortunately Captain Romanus suspected betrayal by the shrimper captain. Or he pretended to. Quite without warning much as he did today, Captain Romanus used deck guns on the vessel and crew soon after I boarded her."

Lorca smiled reminiscently. "Having acquired some doubts about the patriotism of Captain Romanus during our voyage from Germany I wasn't sure he intended to part peacefully with that copper box. I took to the sea at the first hint that he was clearing his deck guns. I alone, I believe, survived that burst of fire that put the shrimper efficiently on the bottom. I swam to the submarine and surrendered most promptly to Romanus' second in command. I mentioned I was a person of consequence. Well, Romanus did not quite dare to execute me out of hand. With the copper box snugly in the sunken boat he ironed me and brought me back to Germany in disgrace. I assure you I extricated myself only with the greatest diffi—"

Gil looked south to where the lifeboat, rigged for diving operations, had been moored.

"The shrimper took the copper box conveniently to the bottom and now, five years later, Romanus is back for it," he said crisply.

Lorca nodded. "He did not permit even his officers to know the position of the rendezvous with the shrimper," he said. "Nor did I know, most unfortunately. After the war Romanus dropped out of sight in Germany but I traced him as far as Havana. Then I lost him. He vanished utterly. I kept patient track of a certain Cuban shipmaster who had had dealings with Nazi U-boats for a price.

"Captain Tacolo was my one possible link with Romanus and that eight hundred thousand dollars. Tacolo's present occupation encouraged me. He still had a ship, that small freighter *Bernelle*, and he was engaged in smuggling aliens to the Florida keys and mainland. Romanus, in need of a ship, might be attracted to *Señor* Captain Tacolo."

Lorca smiled most happily. "He was. And he was not pleased when I strolled aboard the *Bernelle* and greeted him. However, he accepted me as a partner. Rather too readily, I thought. I was uneasy. I had not fared well when last I boarded a ship commanded by Captain Romanus."

He shook his head. "You must listen, Captain Wilcox, though I seem to digress. I have a theory, most important for us to accept if we would understand this Captain Romanus who holds our lives in his hand. It explains even that utterly brutal attack upon us."

He leaned forward and spoke earnestly.

"Captain Romanus is no crude grabber of treasure, with the consequences overwhelming him even as he finds it. In the years since the end of the war he has patiently planned for himself a life of luxury and position. This is based on retaining for himself alone every dollar of the eight hundred thousand without a breath of suspicion to mar his enjoyment of it."

"Quite a trick," Sam Gerrity muttered. "Only he'll have a few guys on his neck, collectin' theirs."

"No!" Lorca insisted. "This Captain Romanus had a reputation for ruthlessness even among U-boat captains to whom the strafing of lifeboats was routine. He has returned to those ethics in peacetime. He simplifies his problems with a machine-gun, completely without scruple and without fear of punishment."

His earnestness held them silent.

"How, you ask me," he said. "That I can tell you!"

SENOR Lorca's smile was proud; in his admiration for himself he had forgotten completely the imminence of death. "This I worked out through my own mental power: Romanus, when he came to the New World after the war brought with him enough money to establish himself for a time somewhere in South America or perhaps North America, as a new personality, completely apart from Captain Romanus, U-boat captain. He created a new identity for himself. Now in this venture, he is again Romanus, a bearded, aloof man, using Nazi tactics in a world of peace. Should he fail there is no prison, no poverty for him, but merely suicide. But he is confident that he can murder or despoil his accomplices, seize his loot and vanish utterly into that prepared personality, established for a year or more now."

Lorca nodded in complete conviction.

"It is for the life of a powerful, respected, wealthy citizen, not for a mere eight hundred thousand that Romanus plays, and he plays recklessly. No one must share; no one must penetrate his new personality."

"It is possible," Gil Wilcox conceded as Lorca beamed triumphantly at him. "The man's not a nut."

Lorca got up off the round gunwale of the raft. He stretched his thin figure commandingly and touched his mustache.

"I understand Romanus," he said. "He has us—like that!" His lean fist closed like the snap of a rat trap. "You see why it is necessary, Captain, that you place yourself under my orders if we are to defeat him. You will find me most reasonable in the division of the—"

Sam Gerrity planted a thick hand on his chest and pushed. "Siddown!" he growled. "All you done so far is get a couple o' guys killed."

Lorca toppled backward, bounced in undignified fashion on the inflated raft and scrambled to his feet in a fury.

"Captain, restrain your man or I will injure him!" he cried.

"How many men has Romanus?" Gil asked abruptly.

"Eight thugs—and there are twelve in Tacolo's regular crew, hardly better," Lorca replied His eyes threatened Sam.

"Seven," said Sam Gerrity with relish.

"Finish your story," said Gil. "Romanus took you on as a partner in Cuba. Then what?"

Lorca darted a glance of malice at Sam Gerrity but did not stand.

"I knew the man," he said sullenly. "I was not willing to put my life in his hands aboard the *Bernelle* without some surety. I made a certain alliance of my own on the ship. And while she was being equipped for the voyage I followed a lead in Havana which might uncover Romanus's new identity. I am skilled at such things. Once I knew that and made the safety of his secret contingent upon my own return I need not fear him."

"Well?"

"Romanus sailed in the *Bernelle* without me, before the agreed time," Lorca said sulkily. "How he underestimated me! I flew to Key West, with two men recommended to me in certain Cuban circles as useful and obedient. You know the rest. Had I had but one moment to speak to Romanus—"

He bit his lips. "All that is finished now. The question is: will you put yourself at my—"

"The answer's 'No!'" Gil said. "Sit him down if he stirs, Sam."

"Sure," said Sam with relish. He hitched himself across the sand to a place beside Lorca. "If you say so, skipper, I just got to, that's all. Stir some, *señor*, why don't ya?"

Lorca was once more the proud Spaniard, wrapping a non-existent cloak around himself in splendid isolation.

"You will die unpleasantly because you have not the brains to accept my leadership," he said haughtily.

"Just stir a little bit, *señor*," Sam said coaxingly. "Just a wiggle." He blew upon his fist.

Gil Wilcox, too, sat still, forearms dropped on his knees, staring out across the darkening bank, beyond which the sunset flamed in uncontrollable red flame. And up on the ridge of the key Storni lay flat, watching Romanus' ship across the waters into which his pal Grosse had tumbled with his neck shot through.

Gil looked southward at buoys and floats strung out beyond the key. Romanus couldn't carry on diving operations for the copper box in the cabin of a sunken shrimper within easy revolver shot of this sand key. Gil's eyes shifted to the jug of water. And they couldn't live long on a jug of water.

He did not even glance at the rubber raft. Nothing would suit Romanus better than to have them attempt escape in that unwieldy thing. He could round them up neatly if they tried fleeing across the flats in darkness.

But every minute they delayed Romanus menaced his dream, for which Jack Field had already died, as casually as a mosquito is slapped.

True, there were miles of empty shoals around the Arido keys. But a little further beyond was no deserted part of the world. Once some casual stray boat from outside made contact with them on this key Romanus was extinct as a dodo. No, Romanus would have to get on with it. Romanus would attack at the first cheap opportunity. And already gray dusk was settling down over the sand.

Gil Wilcox got up and headed north to look over this key he would have to defend against a sub-machine gun. There was a chance Romanus had more automatic weapons to distribute among his seven thugs. Two pistols and one revolver wouldn't keep the survivors of the Arcturus alive very long.

Near the end of the key there was no cover at all, only flat sand, with the long black roots of seagrape straggling along it. Gil stared curiously at these snake-like roots in the gray light.

He understood why cover was so thin on this little key. One of the '47 hurricanes that had harassed Florida must also have lashed these deserted keys. Plainly the sea had overwhelmed this little spot of land, ripping loose stout seagrapes and cutting away many feet of sand. Right down into the water those dead roots stretched, indicating that the island had lost a good bit of land. Big combers had torn off the tip of the island despite the resistance of those roots which ran through the hard coral sand as steel rods reinforce concrete.

"It'll have to be sandpits for cover," Gil said aloud. "But hell, what good's a stout defense when you're sure to be flattened?"

A sudden blinding eye of light hit him. He dropped fast. Even in this semi-darkness the searchlight mounted above the bridge of the *Bernelle* packed a real punch. The man behind it may not have seen him; the light swept southward, combing the key and the waters beyond it; then coming back to cover the north end again.

Soon after the light winked out the motor of Romanus' lifeboat began muttering. With eyes narrowed intently Gil got to his knees and slipped out his revolver.

The boat's mission was patrol, not attack. It headed northward, prudently beyond pistol shot of the island, and began a wide circle around it. Gil kept pace with the boat when the swing was to southward and found Sam Gerrity, Lorca and Storni waiting tensely.

"Is this it?" Sam muttered.

"I would like my automatic," Lorca requested, but got no answer.

A gun blasted the night wide open on the *Bernelle*. But it was no attack; just a burst to throw the hooks of fear into them. The searchlight hunted them at intervals, but on this west side of the island it could not touch them. The operator of the light was careful not to illumine the lifeboat for long-range fire.

"We'll dig in so if they rush us they'll be hitting the beach blind," Gil said. "I want a couple of reserve holes nearer the center of the island."

## CHAPTER III

### THE DARK ISLAND

SEARCHLIGHT, gunfire and circling lifeboat at varied intervals—that was the sporadic pattern of the night. No attack. Romanus, able to work his men in shifts, was softening them up, trying to keep them sleepless, jittery. That action indicated plainly to Gil a dawn assault. But he had no luck in getting his ill-sorted trio to rest even off watch. Sam Gerrity dozed a bit and Gil himself slumped back against the raft, eyes closed but studying under their lids a picture of this islet, the water around it and the *Bernelle*.

His water-soaked watch had quit but Sirius, a little to southward of the celestial equator, gave him a good approximation of how time crawled by.

An hour before the false dawn could be expected Gil drew Sam Gerrity aside.

"I'm doing some snooping," he said, nodding toward the *Bernelle*. "They'll probably fire another burst soon. I want you to answer the burst after this next one with about six shots from one of your automatics—enough to center their attention on the key."

"Look, whyn't I—"

"That's how it's going to be and no chatter," Gil said. "Nobody can be in worse danger than anybody else in this jam."

Sam Gerrity groaned. "You ain't kidding. O.K."

"How'll you have Lorca and Storni while I'm away—tied up or loose?"

Sam meditated, "Loose," he said. "If they get to running or yelling in an attack they might draw some fire off me."

"Good luck," said Gil. He headed up the beach, watching the sky to figure what sort of rhythm the thug working the light had unconsciously fallen into.

He tore off his pants legs to mid-thigh and waded into the warm shallow water north of the island. He slid under, fingers crossed against the voracity of some wandering barracuda, salt stinging his wounded shoulder. He scraped his knees against coral like keen razor edges, got clear and swam toward the high limestone ledge that was the backbone of Big Arido. His revolver, jammed into the side pocket of his shortened pants, dragged at him but comforted him as well.

The searchlight flicked on, turned toward Little Arido. Gil was under water

before it swung his way. He stayed there, eyes wide open, till blackness supplanted the glare on the surface. He reached the rocky key before the light leaped on again.

There, in a sand-scoured pothole, he paused to draw breath and check the movements of the lifeboat. The old steel boat was leaving the side of the *Bernelle* and heading his way. She carried a flashlight and moved with slow caution. He waited for her to pass on a swing seaward, then crossed the ledge.

The *Bernelle's* bow showed plainly, blacker than the waters, a long way off across the dark surface that could turn pitilessly light any instant. From the *Bernelle's* deck came a blast of gunfire. Sam was due to answer the next. Quickly he waded and swam out to eastward, a couple of points off the starboard bow of the ship, and then started toward it in good earnest, keeping his arms under in a fast breast stroke.

Suddenly the water roundabout spattered and churned. Gil gulped. He saw fish jumping—a school of mullet, fleeing from something big under them.

"Stick to the mullet!" Gil breathed.

The searchlight flicked across him before he could submerge. He kept on and the light did not jerk back. Shoving the light around had become purposeless routine for some sleepy follower of Romanus.

The ship grew larger, his eyes strained to spot the silhouette of some watcher along the rail. Nothing. Still the night remained without a dawn.

He made the anchor chain of the *Bernelle*. Now, under the bow high above him, he was screened from the light. It looked like a long climb up that chain. He listened a moment or two but heard only the current talking to itself against the ship's rusty stem.

The *Bernelle's* burst was due, as well as he could reckon; overdue, perhaps. He thrust his fingers through a couple of links and started upward. The links pinched at his fingers as the chain tightened and slackened gently. His bare legs circled the restless steel. He kept going, fast now, for he was counting on being outside the hawsehole when Sam Gerrity cut loose. Climbing like this he was as vulnerable as a shelled egg.

The *Bernelle's* machine gunner fired his blast. Gil climbed faster, reached the hawsehole and clung there.

"Come on, Sam!" he breathed.

Seconds dragged by. Silence hung over Little Arido, utter silence. Gil's muscles were beginning to ache. The gun in his pocket got heavier. He strained his ears.

Not a sound from the key. And not a sound from the foredeck, directly above him.

Gil shifted his fingers. He began shinning up higher, reaching for the top of the low rail. He raised his head and peered over. Hastily he ducked. This weak spot was well guarded.

Ten feet from him he had spotted the massive figure of Romanus. Back to Gil, the captain was facing Little Arido. Gil thinned his lips thoughtfully. Romanus might be watching his lifeboat, which was muttering quietly as it rounded the southern end to return to the ship. Maybe he was watching it with complete concentration. Gil raised his head over the rail again and hooked a forearm over.

Abruptly Captain Romanus went striding aft. At once Gil pulled himself up and started slithering over the rusty rail. Something caught in his pants. The cloth ripped up the side. Gil's head darted toward the tear. One finger touched the revolver dropping out of the torn pocket. Then it plunked into the sea. Gil went hot and cold. He faced aft, waiting, swearing soundlessly.

Romanus paused to speak curtly to somebody. Footsteps came toward Gil. But there was no urgency or caution about them. Too many mullet had been jumping around the ship that night for the splash of the revolver to mean anything.

Gil scrambled across the deck to the cowling of the hatch that led down into the forecastle. He circled that on hands and knees, as the man came clumping forward and passed him. Next instant the fellow was leaning elbows on the rail at the bow.

Gil tightened the belt of his torn trousers. He felt naked, helpless. He touched his sheathknife and ghosted along aft to the broad hatch forward of the bridgehouse. He paused by the hatch, looking up at the bridgehouse.

Somebody sighed gustily, almost in his ear.

Gil sprang to his feet, whirling. There was nobody near him on the deck. His startled eyes made out the checkerboard of grating across the after end of the cargo hatch. Squinting tensely, he made out fingers holding to that grating. A man must be under it, standing on the ladder leading down into the hold. A prisoner!

Gil dropped to his knees, close to the grating, and peered down. Starlight reflected in eyes staring up at him.

"Who are you?" Gil whispered.

There was a pause. The eyes were on him.

"Captain Tacolo, master of thees ship," the man answered, with a little break in his sorrowful voice.

Somebody else was moving without attempt at quiet, in the hold below.

"Tacolo!" Gil repeated. His mind moved fast. "Has Romanus made prisoners of you and your crew?"

"Yes, But one man he killed, 'Tonio. Who—"

"I've come to free you—if you'll fight," Gil whispered. His hands slid over the grating, searching for what secured it.

Tacolo drew noisy breath. "No! No!" he said, voice rising dangerously above a whisper. "We do not fight. Romanus ees a devil. One man of mine he murdered with his hands. No! No!" He burst out into deep, convulsive sobbing.

"Stop it!" muttered Gil. "Tacolo! Won't any of your—"

A voice came strongly over the water, a pleasant tenor voice from the dark key. "Captain Romanus! Captain Romanus!" it hailed.

Lorca!

THE man on the bridge top echoed the call from the key, voice rising high.

Quick footfalls sounded from the wheelhouse. Romanus halted in the port wing of the narrow bridge.

"What do you want?" he shouted, and muttered something softly to his men at searchlight and machine gun.

"I command here on this island now!" Mario Lorca responded.

"So!" said Romanus. He got grim amusement into that syllable.

Gil frowned. Lorca's words explained Sam Gerrity's silence. Somehow they had jumped him.

"I wish to come aboard, Captain." Lorca's voice was calm.

There was silence up on the bridge, a silence of surprise. Then, mockingly, "By all means, *Señor* Lorca!"

"I trust you, Captain," Lorca said earnestly. His voice carried easily though there was no volume to it. "You did not understand, when you were so abrupt last evening, that I had uncovered your name and residence, the new name, the new location, Captain. I left those facts with a friend in Habana lest I fail to return." His voice became reproachful. "You forget my talents incline toward uncovering the hidden, Captain. It was most fortunate for you that you did not kill me."

Romanus smothered a furious expletive. "You, put down that gun!" he whispered. "Get away from that searchlight, *dummkopf!*"

Gil ducked aft and found a ladder on the starboard side. He climbed to the diminutive upper deck.

The lifeboat glided up alongside the ship's quarter after its latest patrol.

Romanus and his men were lined up along the port side, listening to the voice from the dark island. Mario Lorca was cheerful once more.

"Do not be depressed, Captain. No harm has been done—yet. I have here only a most cumbersome raft. Kindly send me a boat."

"Throttle down that motor!" Romanus commanded the man in the boat. He sounded irritable. "Stand by there!"

Gil eased through an after door into the narrow, poorly lit wheelhouse. He stopped dead. In a tiny cubby jammed with the panels of an out-moded radio installation a stringy young fellow sat motionless in a chair, bound head and foot. There was a little pile of matchbooks on the deck in front of his bare feet. His jaw dropped at the sight of Gil. Then a hopeful grin showed and broadened on his face.

"Let's start swimming, huh?" he whispered. "Romanus was going to use those matches on me, blast him!"

Gil looked at the matches and then at the radio installation.

"So this is how Lorca found out where Romanus headed," he muttered. "You tipped him off, Sparks?"

He studied the radio man. More nerve than morals there.

The gaunt, narrow head nodded. "I slid him a few words while I was asking for some weather dope. How about cutting these ropes?"

Gil waited. Sparks scowled ruefully.

"I figured Lorca would cop the prize money," he went on. "I don't think no better'n an elephant can shell peas. Listen to the sap now, beggin' to get aboard!"

Gil cocked his head. But Lorca was not begging. His voice was still calm, assured: "Please send a boat, Captain. I may well help you find what you seek."

"One of you there in the lifeboat!" Romanus growled. "You—Arcano—take the rowboat and go get Lorca."

His voice lifted. "I'll pick you up, Lorca. You will hand over any weapons to my man. I'm watching you!"

Gil began slashing Sparks' bonds with his sheathknife. "Obey me or I'll slug you," he warned. "Crossers don't rate with me. Stand by here now."

Sparks nodded. He rubbed his wrists and wriggled his legs.

Oars clattered as Arcano rowed toward the island.

Gil stole a few feet forward in the wheelhouse and bent over a dim-lit desk in the corner that served in place of a chartroom.

One flickering bulb showed him a pencilled chart of the Arido keys, skillfully enlarged from the government chart. A line was ruled from the high spot of Big Arido. It cut Little Arido and ran on across the water southward of it. Crosses along that line corresponded with the buoys indicating Romanus' various diving operations.

Gil understood. One of the two bearings Romanus must have taken to mark the position of the sunken shrimper was missing. Perhaps some coral head or peaked rock out on the bank, from which he had drawn his second line, had disappeared from the surface under the lashing of the hurricane. At any rate, instead of an absolute location, Romanus had a line. Somewhere along it the shrimper lay on the bottom.

Gil's forehead wrinkled. Even so handicapped it was queer Romanus had not readily located the wreck.

Gil glided back to the fidgeting radio operator and beckoned him to follow. Outside in the blacker gloom at the base of the stack he paused.

Lorca was hailing again. His voice was closer and the rattle of oarlocks accompanied it. "Captain, I play fair with you. I must warn you I suspect Wilcox, who shot your man, is probably boarding or already on your ship."

Romanus gave vent to a furious guttural. Then his voice steadied, "Give me that gun! Jose, guard the prisoners below! Throw that light on the rowboat. Keep your hands in sight, Lorca!"

Sparks' bony fingers were grabbing at Gil's arm. "Over the side!" he breathed.

Gil shook free. "Slide aft," he muttered. "Wait for me near the lifeboat."

He slipped around the starboard side of the wheelhouse. Romanus was down on the foredeck, sending a man to search the bow, forming up others to comb the ship in a quick drive aft.

"Arcano!" he called. "Pull forward here, and look round the bow. You watch, too, Lorca! Now—throw that light, Wald!"

Gil jerked a soggy handkerchief from his pocket and wrapped it tightly around the blade of his sheath knife so he could grip it.

The man Wald was rotating the searchlight on its mount. Gil took three quick steps toward him and brought down the heavy haft of the knife.

Wald wilted without a grunt. Gil pulled the handkerchief off the blade and grabbed the electric cable. He wrenched it from its socket and in the sudden darkness cut it with his knife.

Somebody screamed and charged at him. Gil was knocked back hard against the bridgerail. It crackled and gave. He whipped an arm around the neck of his enemy and brought him along as he toppled into the sea.

BEFORE Gil went under one thought drilled through his mind. He had got the light. He wasn't beaten yet. But his whole play hinged on that lifeboat alongside the ship.

He straight-armed his floundering opponent, got clear of his clawing hands and swam upward.

His lips cleared the water.

"Sparks!" he called. "Sparks! Cast off the lifeboat!"

His wet eyes made out the dark hull only thirty feet farther aft. He stroked toward it furiously.

Plenty was going on aboard the *Bernelle* but Gil had no time to find out what.

A man rose up in the lifeboat, scrambled forward over the thwarts and stood in the bow, staring down. Orange light streaked out from his hand as his gun roared. Lead plunked into the water alongside Gil's head.

A figure came hurtling down from the deck of the *Bernelle*. The gunman, lightning fast, dodged aft in the boat. But lightning fast wasn't fast enough. The dropping body hit him. Both men, intertwining, thrashed on the gunwhale for a furious second and then flopped overside.

Gil swam toward them. A head loomed in front of him. It wasn't Sparks' narrow skull. Gil smacked both hands down on the man's shoulders and shoved him under, deep under, and kicked at him when he went down below the reach of his arms.

He grabbed for a bight of the lifeline dangling outside the boat, got a hand on the rail and started to heave himself up.

"Wait for me!" Sparks gasped behind him.

Gil pulled himself aboard. The motor was still idling softly. He scrambled toward it. His head jerked up as he moved. The boat was drifting aft along the ship's side. Sparks had cast off the line.

He fell over the gear lever and shoved the motor into reverse.

"Look out!" yelped Sparks from somewhere overside. A head was showing over the starboard gunwale. Gil smashed his fist into it and it dropped soundlessly.

"There, Sparks?" he called.

"Make knots!" Sparks panted, shoving his head up into sight. "Me, I'm safer here."

Gil looked astern. The boat was making agonizingly slow sternway close alongside the *Bernelle*. He grabbed the tiller and kept her going that way. He felt as if he were back again in that nightmare when Romanus had blasted the *Arcturus*. Any moment—

To turn her would waste seconds and he had no seconds to spare. He groped feverishly for the throttle control but the devilish thing eluded him. The boat churned away from the *Bernelle* with maddening slowness while his fingers searched.

Suddenly he bunched himself down behind the motor. Men had reached the afterdeck of the ship. The two swimming thugs yelped for lines.

"Bring her up alongside, you, or I'll cut you in half!" Romanus roared.

"Keep aft and under!" Gil muttered to Sparks.

He straightened out like a spring and went over the side feet first. When he came up he made out Sparks close to him.

"That trigger-happy kraut!" Gil whispered. "Maybe he'll try to get her. He's sunk here if he smashes her up."

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Romanus fired a burst. Lead ripped the water around the boat but did not touch her.

"Arcano!" Romanus bellowed. "Row! Get the lifeboat! She's deserted! Go get her Fetch a flashlight aft, there!"

Sparks groaned. "That blasted rowboat!"

Gil didn't answer. He was estimating the slow sternway of the lifeboat. With no one at her tiller she was curving perversely over to westward. Even so she was slightly widening the distance to the *Bernelle*. But soon that circling course would take her back to the ship.

He pulled himself aft, hand over hand, by the dangling bights of the lifeline. The reversing propeller threw a current of bubbling water at him, with a threat of whirling blades. Gingerly he reached for the rudder and shoved it slowly back toward dead center. The boat began to straighten out.

"We'll get it, Captain!" Lorca said calmly, close at hand. "Pull on your right oar, man."

"Rowboat's jumping at us!" Sparks whispered. "That guy's breakin' his back!"

From the stern of the *Bernelle* a flashlight probed at the lifeboat. At this distance the beam lit her scarred sides only feebly. The sound of oars was almost on top of them.

The time had come. Gil clambered aboard again.

From the rowboat, a blur on the dark water, Lorca's sharp voice rang out: "He's in the lifeboat, Romanus! Destroy it!"

Gil shoved the gear lever and put over the tiller. His fingers searched frantically for the throttle control as the lifeboat sluggishly put her stern to the *Bernelle*.

Romanus was roaring something. Whether he was answering Lorca or voicing a threat of death Gil did not hear. All his senses were straining in that fumbling search for the throttle.

From the rowboat came Lorca's clear voice and the sharp crack of an automatic. Gil paid no heed. Suddenly his fingers touched the control quadrant.

"O.K., Sparks?" he yelled.

"Gun her!"

It might as well have been a command to Captain Romanus. As the lifeboat thrust slowly ahead the hellish roar of that sub-machine gun blasted Gil's ears. He shrank down low in the bottom, gritting his teeth. To zigzag would prolong the time within effective range and Romanus had enough lead to spread it wide.

The boat jarred with shocks that did not come from the pounding engine; splinters flew, Gil's body winced and wriggled but he kept the boat going away from the *Bernelle*.

Romanus reached the end of his clip. Gil popped up for a quick look around. He oriented himself by sights of the *Bernelle* and the white sand of Little Arido. He couldn't afford to run this prize on coral.

Sparks, legs dragging and splashing, pulled himself in over the rail. He stared astern.

"There's one wagon I don't mind leaving without my pay," he shouted. "I—"

He dived for the bottom. Romanus had another clip in. But a sub-machine gun is no long-range weapon. Though Gil felt a thousand slugs piercing his back not a bullet hit near him. Before the clip was gone Romanus ceased fire.

Sparks came up with a crow of triumph. "Look what I bounced my schnozz on!" he yelled. "An automatic! That guy I landed on must have dropped it in—"

Gil reached forward. "Let's have it!" he said crisply.

"Don't trust me, huh?" Sparks said, most aggrieved.

"That's right. Pass it over."

A pause. Then, reluctantly, Sparks shoved the butt of the automatic aft, into Gil's groping hand.

"All I was out for was a piece of easy change," Sparks said sadly. "You can't blame a guy for going for a fast buck for himself in a menagerie like that."

"You're O.K. in a scrap, Sparks, but I don't know how your manners would be in a bank," Gil said. He throttled down.

"We fan out o' these keys now?" Sparks asked.

"We don't," Gil said. "With this shoal power boat I'm boss around here."

Sparks guffawed impolitely. "You don't know these throat-cutting sons like I do."

"I've got the lifeboat," Gil said. "She's all I need—the key piece in this game. I can go to Nassau in her, sailing when her gas runs out, and turn loose the Royal Navy on Romanus. The *Bernelle*, drawing what she does, can't chase me over the Banks."

"Yeah. That's why I'd scram."

"Romanus can't use his ship in the shallows to search for his wreck. He can't even lower a diver. He can't risk standing by here long. I'm staying, myself, and so is the eight hundred thousand he's fishing for."

"Sounds swell," Sparks said. "Only thing, them two boys will put us through a meatchopper and spit on the pieces. I love jack—but I say, 'Make knots fast!' "

"I've a bill to collect on here," Gil said. He looked hard in the gray light at the *Bernelle's* ex-radio operator. "Now shut up. You're lookout. I've got to miss the diving markers south of the key. Watch! And never forget I'm watching you."

## CHAPTER IV

### A MAN MUST TRY

FIFTEEN minutes later, leaving Sparks in the lifeboat anchored in shallow water off the west side of Little Arido Gil waded ashore. He had the rotor off the timer in his pocket just for luck.

The day was coming. The precious automatic in his undamaged pocket bumped against his leg. He got it out to dry off as he reached the beach. Romanus still had a rowboat.

With caution he moved toward the pit where the yellow rubber raft had been dumped. Sam Gerrity was writhing at the bottom of the sandhole. He had spat out a gag torn from his own shirt but three belts wrapped tightly around him made him helpless as a frost-bitten caterpillar.

Sam was humiliated. "I kept thinkin' Lorca was a panty-waisted puffball but he ain't," he said dismally when his sore mouth could talk. "He took a real chance to jump me just as I was set to answer the tommy gun burst. An' he got away with it, too, mostly him, though that long beanpole Storni lent a hand when I was down with a crack on the conk. Do I need a cigarette!"

"Might be some in our new boat," Gil said, jerking his hand. "There's some grub in her. Swim aboard and meet Sparks. He'll tell you about it."

Sam glared ferociously at the belts. "When I get at that Lorca—"

"Cheer up; he may lose his pants," Gil said. He gave Sam the rotor and told him to parallel his course in shoal water. Heading north he came to the end where the black seagrape roots twisted over the sand like paralyzed snakes. He stopped. In the increasing light he studied that grotesque landscape. Hurricane seas, months ago, must have torn away much sand.

Rousing himself, he started toward the thin and harassed bush that crowned the ridge of the key. It would give cover. He moved erratically, never following a straight course. Beyond that ridge lay the *Bernelle* and Romanus himself might have landed with his gun in the rowboat.

In the midst of a seagrape cluster two long arms suddenly shot up, empty palms toward Gil.

His automatic jerked up. "Come out!" he commanded.

The tall, clumsy form of Storni emerged. His eyes were bright with fear; his left cheek twitched. Gil frisked him hopefully. No automatic.

"That cockroach Lorca took 'em both an' deserted me—" Storni began.

"Back to the boat and surrender to Gerrity!" Gil cut in. "Move!"

Storni slouched across the beach, arms still high. Gil grinned briefly and with no let-up in caution pushed into the bush. He looked out across the lagoon at the *Bernelle* and got a jolt.

Men were moving on her deck. The massive body of Romanus was planted on that narrow bridge. There was no sign of Lorca. The anchor windlass clattered and the chain Gil had climbed began to clank in slowly through the hawsepipe. A man with a coiled line, a leadsman, walked across her foredeck.

The *Bernelle* was getting under way.

Gil waited. The anchor broke out. Romanus began swinging the ship with skill and caution. She headed southward dead slow, and the leadsman began calling the depths.

Nobody on deck showed any interest in Little Arido. Romanus headed her to pass well to southward of the island, outside the buoys marking his diving operations.

Gil trotted back to the lifeboat. Storni helped him aboard with obsequious concern. Sparks sat at the tiller, eating a chunk of the night lunch they had captured with her.

Sam Gerrity was still sunk. His eyes roved sulkily from Sparks to Storni. He flipped a thumb at Sparks.

"This buddy of Romanus your second in command around here?" he asked.

"Look to southward," Gil said. "Romanus is leaving us."

Sam Gerrity did a dance in the rolling boat. "What d'you know! Had enough, huh? An'—the eight hundred grand!"

Sparks laughed derisively. "Sure, just slap it aboard and we're off to Miami Beach!" He wrinkled his gaunt head at Gerrity. "Romanus has been here two weeks, stupid, with a chart, diving gear, all that, and he hasn't raised a nickel. If he's given up—"

Sam stood up again. "If a sock in the jaw—"

"Pipe down, both of you!" Gil snapped. His eyes were skeptical as he watched the *Bernelle* picking her way steadily out across the shallows toward the deep, hurrying water of the Gulf Stream. But his voice reflected no doubt. "Romanus doesn't think we have a chance to find that copper box. He may be mistaken."

GREED flamed on Sparks' face and then faded out. He shook his head. "That guy scoured every inch of the shoal bottom south o' this island along a bearing. He's a crook and a killer, sure, but I'd say he was seaman enough to take a fine bearing."

"I'm sure his bearing is right," Gil said.

"You got some ideas?" Sparks asked.

"Just one," Gil said. "But for eight hundred thousand dollars it's worth a shot. Ease her close in by the northern point."

"The southern end's—"

"Do I teach this crooked skeleton's uncle a little discipline?" Sam Gerrity asked with fire in his eye. "Arguing!"

Gil wilted him.

Standing in the bow he conned the lifeboat back and forth off the point, estimating the exact area under water the dead seagrape extended.

"O.K.," he said at last. "Now down to southward."

The *Bernelle* was out beyond the light green water of the shallows. She was standing to northward along the distant edge of the Bank.

"Tide's rising," Gil said. "Anchor in close."

Ashore he stepped off the distance from the last battered palmetto and seagrape clusters to the southern tip of the key. It was all loose sand he trod, with here and there a spear of salt grass just beginning to grow. Gil pointed to the buoys and balsa floats anchored out in the shallows.

"Those markers strung along the line of Romanus' bearing?"

Sparks nodded. "The red ones are."

"Where did he send down the diver first?"

"At the buoy nearest the beach here."

Gil Wilcox turned to Storni. "Go up the beach a hundred yards and stand by. Don't go further." He tapped his automatic.

Storni plodded away.

Gil picked up a piece of driftwood. Starting fifty feet from the water he drew a line up the rising sand of the point, a prolongation of the line of the buoys. Sam and Sparks trailed along behind him, staring. At the end of a hundred and fifty feet Gil stopped.

"Somewhere under that line is the wreck of the shrimper or I'm a U-boat captain," he said, without elation.

Sparks shook his head. "She sank in shallow—"

"How dumb can a guy get!" Sam burst out. "You mean, skipper—"

Gil nodded. "This is more a sandbar than an island," he said. "Romanus should have had a look at those seagrape roots at the northern end. They told me the September hurricane—it was the worst in fifty years—shifted this bar. It piled up a terrific sea that swept acres of sand southward clear across the key."

"An' piled sand up into dry land over the shrimper," Sam added.

"The island moved!" Sparks said in awe. "No wonder Romanus couldn't hit it."

"One end extended south," Gil said.

"What're we waiting for?" Sam cried. "We c'n make wooden shoves out o' driftwood. We got Storni to dig."

"We'll need more than Storni," Gil said. "That wreck probably hasn't been swept away but at best it's buried deep. We'd have to dig pits, shored up with driftwood, along this line every twenty feet until we hit her."

He glanced up at the sun, already beginning to hit strongly out of an almost cloudless sky.

"The smart thing to do is to clear out of here and get rid of Storni, who's too dumb to know what's up. We'll pick up a boat, equipment and supplies fast. It'll take pumps to handle the seepage."

"There's a watertank and enough grub for a day or two in the boat," Sparks said. "We can spear crayfish on the flats."

"Sure, let's dig," Sam Gerrity said, with an approving nod at Sparks. He bent and scooped up some sand. "Fine stuff. It's packed hard. It'll hold like a rock wall."

Gil shrugged his shoulders. "Pumps," he reminded them.

There was treasure fever on their faces. Sam Gerrity had his knife out. He started to whittle a handle in a battered piece of one by twelve plank.

"How about it, skipper?" he said coaxingly.

Gil's eyes disregarded him. He was looking past his flat-faced follower at the smoke of the *Bernelle,* almost hull down off the bank. It was hard to judge at this distance but it seemed to him she had stopped.

"Dig, then," he said. "But don't poop yourself. You may need your strength."

BY THE time the sun was high enough to pour heat down into the shaft there was no doubt about the *Bernelle.* She was returning to Arido.

Gil climbed out of the pit, now down over his head, by the crude ladder and his eyes narrowed at the sight of her.

"What's it mean?" sweating Sam Gerriety muttered. "Blast it; we got to roof this hole over and cover it with sand?"

"I'll tell you when," Gil said. He walked up the ridge of the island for a better look, running a finger over tough palms reddened, almost blistering, from Sam's homemade spade handle.

In a clump of seagrape an upreaching branch bent suddenly against the wind and then another near it swayed. Gil jerked out his automatic. He made a quick wide circle, up over the ridge, and flattened out, waiting, watching the storm-harried bush.

From a clump of palmetto the smooth olive countenance of Mario Lorca peered out into the open. Gil raised his pistol.

"Keep coming, Lorca," he said curtly.

Lorca's large brown eyes widened. Almost simultaneously a brilliant smile swept across his face. He spread his empty hands wide, and stood up.

"Ah, you are too smart for me, Captain," he said admiringly.

"Turn around. Drop your gun!"

Lorca obeyed. Gil picked it up. Two automatics now!

"Back over the ridge," Gil commanded. "No, wait a moment; back the way you came."

"This was the way I—"

"More to southward. Any food hidden in the bush? To southward, I said!"

Reluctantly Lorca obeyed. Even then, as he pushed through the thin underbrush he kept edging sideways. Gil found the reason, a hole in the sand under a sizable seagrape. Lorca pulled aside a couple of palmetto fans near the hole and disclosed a basket and canteen.

"I thought to hide my supplies," he said sadly. "Captain, you will think me a double-crosser. Well, that is true."

He flashed his smile. "Frankly, it was because I saw advantage to myself that I warned Romanus of your probable presence on the *Bernelle*. But when my self-interest and your interests coincide you will find me true as steel."

"I decline the partnership," Gil said. He measured the distance of the *Bernelle*. She was in green water now and her speed had dropped as she began picking her way in over the shoals. "What's your game, staying behind to spy on us?"

"Your escape would mean we must flee empty-handed. If I could steal the lifeboat and maroon you—"

"Where's the lifeboat you landed in?"

Lorca pointed across the island. "Sunk in shoal water, held down by coral rocks. Captain, if you and I—"

"Save it!" Gil commanded. He drove Lorca ahead of him. Sam Gerrity and Sparks, in a panic, were laying odd scraps of timber over their treasure hole with sullen assistance from Storni.

"Just when we got a fortune right in our mitts!" Sam lamented, with a murderous glance at the *Bernelle*. "Smooth that sand, you, Storni! Smooth it good!"

"Sam, run the lifeboat around the other side of the island," Gil said. He handed Sam one of the pistols. "Stand by for us. We'll finish up here."

"Running!" Sam moaned. "Skipper, with two guns—"

Sparks jerked a hand seaward. "That tommy gun's the ace of trumps."

They leveled off around the covered pit and retreated to the underbrush along the ridge to watch the ship. Behind them the lifeboat lay anchored in the lagoon.

"Time to go riding?" Sparks suggested. "She's getting close."

Gil watched in silence. He watched the *Bernelle* and he watched Mario Lorca.

Lorca, his dark face without expression, contrived to murmur a few private words to Sparks. The gaunt radio operator hit him on the jaw. Lorca shrugged, meeting Gil's eyes.

"A man must try," he said. He smiled impertinently. "It is restful to deal with a gentleman. You will not kill me for a little treachery."

"You're in a spot, Lorca," Gil said. "Romanus may think you've switched sides again."

He leaned forward suddenly, close to that calm face and bright brown eyes. "Got anything to tell me, Lorca?"

Lorca started. His eyes dug into Gil's. "To—to tell you?" he stammered. "What do you mean, Captain, to tell you?"

Gil grinned. "O.K. As you said, 'A man must try.'"

Lorca rubbed his hands together.

"Riddles, Captain," he complained. "Why—"

"All hands down in the scrub," Gil ordered.

The *Bernelle* worked in close to southward of the point. Romanus stood on his bridge, binoculars raking the key at intervals. The leadsman yelped, swung his lead, yelped again, higher pitch warning of shoaling water. All of a sudden, with way still on her, the ship's anchor plunked into the sea and chair roared through her hawsepipe. Before she brought up Romanus had swung down the bridge ladder to the deck. He vanished on the starboard side, behind the bridgehouse. Several other men moved that way, too.

Lorca's face was very blank.

"What's this?" Sparks muttered.

"Sparks, tell Sam to ket the motor turning and lift anchor," Gil said grimly. "I think I see this play."

"Oke," said Sparks, starting.

"Wait!" Gil added. "Find Lorca's rowboat over there and dump the water and coral out of it. Speed!"

Sparks pelted away. A few moments later Lorca began edging casually along the ridge. He found the muzzle of Gil's pistol on him.

"No desertion," Gil said. "That goes for you, too, Storni."

Lorca shrugged and lay still; Storni chewed his nails. Next moment they were all focusing tensely on the *Bernelle.*

From behind the ship a boat came churning into sight, a small gleaming white and chromium fishing cruiser. Her signal mast had been broken off short to aid in her concealment.

Romanus' round-shouldered hand was at the controls atop the cabin, yellow face turned toward the key. Beside him, sub-machine gun in hand, stood Romanus himself. The cabin below swarmed with his thugs.

For a long second Gil studied that boat. "Back to the lifeboat!" he commanded. "Run!"

His voice was sharp. Without doubt Romanus had lured that guileless fishing boat to him out in the Stream by some bellowed tale of gas or water shortage; then overwhelmed her unsuspecting crew. Piracy had been added to murder; Romanus was playing even more recklessly for all or nothing.

It looked bad for Jack Field's kids, Gil thought soberly; Romanus had a craft that could pursue the lifeboat across the Great Bahama Bank and make two knots to her one. His key piece had become a pawn.

With Gil behind, driving them on, Lorca and Storni rushed toward the lifeboat. Sam Gerrity stood waist-deep in water, holding her bow in toward the beach. Sparks waited by the rowboaat.

"Let's go!" Storni squalled hysterically. "They're after us with a fast boat!"

Gil halted. "All four of you drag that rowboat up into the brush and hide," he commanded. "Jump! Get it there! That cruiser'll be in sight any minute!"

He climbed into the lifeboat and speeded Sam Gerrity's reactions with a shove that sent him overboard. But the others remained motionless, uncertain.

"What's the play?" Sam asked.

"Get hidden with that boat or you'll be dead inside half an hour!" Gil snapped. "Shoot if they don't move, Sam!"

"I'm moving," said Sparks. He bent and gripped the gunwale of the rowboat. "Bear a hand, boys!"

Gil reversed the motor and worked the lifeboat into deeper water. For an instant he sized up the wind and the choppy little sea. Then he pointed her northeast, inside the rocky shore of Big Arido. As she thrust ahead he secured the tiller tightly with a line from gunwale to gunwale.

"The big gamble!" he whispered. He opened the throttle wide, watched her a moment longer and then dived overside.

## CHAPTER V

### THE GRAVE IN THE SAND

GIL swam his hardest back to the key, head lifting for a quick glance to southward. No gleam of chromium from around the point yet.

He hit the beach fast.

Halfway up to the underbrush four men had halted the job of dragging the rowboat. They stood, paralyzed, watching the lifeboat, their one best bet, chug away from the island, deserted, useless.

Gil charged at them. For a moment he expected mutiny. His face was more threatening than the lifted automatic in his hand. They hesitated; then bent to their job.

Gil grabbed the stern of the boat and almost shoved it out of their hands. The pace lifted; they struggled on up the shelving, clogging sand.

"Faster!" he snapped. "Run! Faster!"

In his ears was the muttering thunder of powerful engines. She was coming close, now, though not yet in sight.

Brush crackled under their feet. They tried to drop the boat. Gil's voice rang in their ears. He drove them on, swinging the boat around stout seagrape clusters, dragging it with bottom hissing across palmetto scrub and salt grass.

"Stop!" he said. They dropped panting beside the boat. Only Lorca's brilliant eyes lifted to his.

Gil reconnoitered. Romanus' pirated fishing cruiser had swung around the point. She was shooting northeastward. Fast. The lifeboat was hammering steadily on toward the shallows inside Big Arido.

At a run Gil came back through the bush. "All hands!" he called. "Grab that boat! On with her!"

His arm pointed ahead, at the western beach.

"In sight o' the *Bernelle?*" Storni cried. "You're nuts! Fellas, he's nuts!"

Gil swung the automatic at his head. Storni ducked and grabbed the gunwale of the boat. Lorca nodded most submissively. He was quick to resume his grasp on the bow. The others took hold. They heaved together and the boat was dragged on across the key. They broke through the bush and hauled her down the slope of sand.

"Run her along in the shallows!" Gil cried. "Run, I said!"

He grabbed the bow line, drew it over his shoulder and plunged ahead. Through knee-deep water they ran the boat southward. The sand was hard under their feet. The boat towed easily.

The *Bernelle,* anchored off the southern point, grew larger ahead of them. Gil saw three men on her bridge. Their shoulders were to him; they were staring in the direction the fishing cruiser had taken. They'd be listening to sounds of pursuit, waiting for the blare of Romanus' gun as he tore apart the lifeboat and the men in her.

"All aboard!" Gil spoke softly, though those watchers on the Bernelle were two hundred yards away. "Sparks, you and Storni take the oars—"

"I ain't going!" Storni cried. He swung around.

Gil clipped him with the gun. With a jolting fist he sent the tall man tumbling over the gunwale into the boat.

"Even straw men may bolster our bluff," he said. "Lorca, you're promoted to that rowing thwart. Shove her off!"

They shoved and scrambled in. Gil sat in the bow to encourage his dubious striking force. Sam Gerrity bolstered Storni in the sternsheets, tucked his automatic under his knee, where it would be handy, and worked up a tough fighting face.

Sparks and Lorca rowed in silence. Lorca's face was placid as if he were out daisy picking. Though Gil had voiced no threat the man rowed hard. Sparks looked steady as a rock.

"Romanus is sure to have left the weak sisters to keep the ship," Gil told them. "And we've got two guns."

The rowboat crept away from the key. Gil's low commands brought her around toward the stern of the *Bernelle.* There'd be more than one line still dangling on that starboard side, where Romanus had led his thugs down into the fishing cruiser.

A man on the *Bernelle's* bridge turned to leeward to light a cigarette. He saw them, hands cupped. Next instant his cry reached them.

It was the worst sort of break but Gil was ready.

"Put your backs into it!" he cried. "Make her move! They're paralyzed. We'll get 'em!"

A squat fellow with long arms leaped to the whistle lanyard and steam wailed from the *Bernelle's* stack. Next instant, with a whack of his long arm, he sent one of the other hands running forward.

"Romanus can't hear that whistle above his motors!" Gil cried. "Pull, we've got 'em!"

Unconvincing words! The *Bernelle's* windlass clattered. A man dashed into the wheelhouse. A bullet whined over their heads from a pistol in the squat man's hands. The ship's propeller churned. She edged ahead, taking the strain off the anchor chain. The links came up out of the sea faster. The anchor broke out. The ship was under way.

Gil's plan had failed. Storni came to, screamed shrilly as another bullet sang past, and writhed in his seat. The boat shipped water.

"Club him!" Gil said. Storni stiffened. He sat rigid, eyes imploring Sam Gerrity. Better than hysterics, anyhow.

"I apologize for my army," Lorca said softly.

"Back to the island," Gil commanded. "There's enough cover there to stand off—"

"Save it!" Sparks snapped and Lorca's smile was cynical.

"Well, well, well!" cried Sam Gerrity. "Look who's yella!"

"You save it, too!" Sparks said, bending his oars. "I can die without kidding if I got to."

Gil grinned. "O.K. We'll see."

He crouched in the bow and bleakly considered the set-up. The *Bernelle,* with a man forward conning her, was going ahead dead slow toward the lagoon, barely crawling through the treach-

erous shoals. Squatty was taking no unnecessary chances. And from the lagoon came the increasing sound of the cruiser's motors. Romanus must be returning.

The rowboat's bow grated on the key. They piled out. Gil watched the *Bernelle's* bridge. Suddenly Squatty's companion jerked a hand out of the wheelhouse, pointing at something Gil could not see. Squatty batted down his arm at once. The movement was urgent, a savage reproof. Why?

To Gil's ears came a sudden break in the roar of the exhaust from Romanus' cruiser. It gave him the answer.

"Romanus is landing to take us in the rear," Gil said. "Well, when you're too weak to defend, you've got to attack! Come on!"

GIL cut diagonally up the beach toward where the hurricane-w r a c k e d vegetation struggled for life. Behind him thudded other feet. He glanced around to make sure Lorca was following. Only Storni was quitting. He was still at the water's edge.

The automatic felt heavy and unfamiliar in Gil's hand.

The bush along the island's ridge looked pitifully thin and sand-choked here. Poor cover for a lizard. Gil ran faster. He almost made the crest.

The massive body of Romanus rose up abruptly on the other side of the ridge. His eyes blazed as he saw Gil. The sub-machine gun snapped to his shoulder.

That was the only advantage this wild charge gave them, that Romanus' gun was not shoulder high.

Gil turned loose the automatic from the waist. He tried no aiming; he put his lead in the air as fast as his finger could move. Fast lead! Once Romanus cut loose the fight was finished.

Romanus spun around. The sub-machine gun, chattering, kicked itself out of his grip. He went down on his side, rolling. Another man, at his heels, dodged, firing at Gil. Gil shot back.

Many things were happening; the sequence got blurred.

The yellow-faced man with the round shoulders flung himself like a tackler at the loose sub-machine gun. It had hit sand muzzle first and stabbed in. On his knees he jerked it out and fired. The yellow, contorted face went streaming red—became an ugly blob. The sand-filled barrel had burst from end to end.

The man sagged over onto the red face. Sam's gun was roaring in Gil's ear. On his other side the weaponless Sparks picked up the bloody-faced man's automatic, shook it violently and started firing. Then out of all this confusion two men went pelting back down the sandy slope, firing backward as they fled toward the chromium cruiser.

She was beached. Her flaring bow was hard aground. Her motors began churning. Gray, sand-filled water swirled forward along her sides. Near her the fugitives slowed, glancing back.

"Keep 'em going!" Gil cried. He fired, with an unpleasant feeling that this was the last bullet in his pistol.

"I could use a gun," Lorca, behind him, called out.

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The lone man on the stranded cruiser splashed over into shoal water. Her failure to back off had thrown him into wide-mouthed panic. He started running south along the beach. His wild appearance injected renewed fear into the others. They swerved and dashed with him along the wet sand in full flight again.

"The cruiser!" Gil gasped. "Get her off!"

He shoved his hot gun in his pocket and grabbed the biggest timber in the litter above high water. Sparks was already aboard her, eyes and gun swiveling for stragglers.

Sam Gerrity grabbed the big stick and together they worked it under her bow. Lorca joined them and they heaved. The boat stirred, slid a few inches, stopped. They attacked her again. The boat grated backward.

"Hold it!" Gil cried. "She'll come now when we want her."

He swept an arm across his sweating face and looked around.

*As the sub-machine gun snapped to Romanus' shoulder, Gil turned loose the automatic.*

The three fleeing men had taken to the water at the end of the sandspit and were swimming toward the *Bernelle*.

Squatty got way on the ship. She steamed toward the swimmers. The lookout on the foredeck began shooting over their heads. Suddenly he stopped, let out a yell. Abruptly Squatty shoved the engine room telegraph over and gestured furiously to the helmsman. The man forward was leaping and pointing ahead.

The helmsman was rattled. He put the wheel over fast and Squatty's voice rose to a shriek.

"Wrong way! Put her back, you—"

The *Bernelle* heeled suddenly and the sound of steel grating on coral came to Gil. She lurched over farther to starboard, then stopped.

Gil's eyes switched back to the ridge of the key.

"Do we get out there an' take 'em?" Sam Gerrity cried. "How about it, skipper, do we take 'em? Hey, look!"

The grating over the *Bernelle's* fore hatch had suddenly been knocked off. Men came running out, led by a fat and shrieking man who charged the bridge with empty hands.

"Captain Tacolo," said Lorca calmly. "He will fight at last when they abuse his ship. Is that not interesting?"

"Man, could we slough 'em now!" Sam Gerrity cried.

"Let 'em fight and swim," Gil said. "We've business ashore. Sam, stand watch over our new cruiser. Sparks, back to Romanus!"

"I will accompany you," Lorca said.

"It seems I am most firmly on your side again, Captain."

ROMANUS had come to. He lay sprawling on the sand but he had managed to support head and shoulders against the back of his dead henchman with the crimson face.

The arms of Romanus were clutched across his belly and his face was bloodless above the brown beard. His glance passed over Gil and rested upon Mario Lorca.

"So, Lorca?" he said thickly. "You have talked yourself clear again."

Lorca inspected him calmly, noting, as Gil did, that the wound hidden by his crossed arms was well below his heart. Gil closed his lips tightly and stood quietly by, like a mere spectator.

"I am unhurt, Captain Romanus," Lorca said. "Do not be concerned about me."

His voice was not quite as calm as his face; it shook perceptibly as he launched that taunt.

Romanus grunted. His eyes lifted to Lorca's face and furious hatred gleamed in them.

Lorca touched the shattered barrel of the sub-machine gun with a casual foot; then bent, picked it up and examined it.

Sparks would have spoken; Gil stopped him.

"How unfortunate that you relied upon this weapon to kill with rather than upon my brains to think with, to think your way back to that little copper box, Captain," Lorca said. "It is quite possible I would have been satisfied with half my money."

Romanus' lips stirred but he did not speak.

Lorca sighed elaborately.

"So all this treachery that began when, betraying your crazy Fuehrer, you wiped out master and crew of the shrimper has come to this—death for you on the same desolate key where they died," Lorca said. "Ironic, is it not? Quite in the tradition of the Greek drama. You fool!"

His hidden rage, too strong to be suppressed any longer, erupted in those last two words. And Romanus, too, reacted to that emotion.

"Treachery!" Romanus muttered. His deep voice came weakly from his lips. "Treachery began with you—ends with you. I knew you and that shrimper fool were preparing to steal the money. You had my orders—"

"You lie!" Lorca broke in swiftly. "This murderous thug—"

Gil whipped an arm around Lorca's head and clamped his palm across his mouth.

"Let him talk," he said. "You started him. Move and I'll tap you."

Romanus was going, faint but remorseless. "I have been thinking, Lorca," he said. "My orders to you were to get that vessel under way immediately. What were you doing after you and her master rowed away from the submarine? I waited half an hour and she did not stir. I hailed and got no answer from either of you—"

With a desperate twist of his body Lorca broke from Gil's grip. He lifted the shattered tommy-gun in his hands and brought it down with all his strength on Romanus' head. The blow would have crushed a steel helmet. It killed Romanus instantly.

From the dead man Lorca spun around, tossing the gun away, flinging his arms in the same movement high above his head.

"Don't!" he cried, eyes on Gil's pistol. "I have surrendered! He deserved that!"

Gil lowered his pistol. "You're too fast on the surrender for me, Lorca," he said curtly. "It may not do you much permanent good."

Mario Lorca drew a deep breath and smiled at them. "I must risk that."

Sparks dragged his eyes off the body of Captain Romanus, who would never live like a well-to-do gentleman in some unknown, languorous tropic place.

"Fast is right," he muttered.

Lorca waved a hand toward the distant *Bernelle*. Tacolo was storming about on her bridge, shouting orders in a fury of excitement and confusion. But already the ship was standing up straighter. Either gravity or Tacolo's handling was sliding her off the coral into deeper water.

"Captain Tacolo will be leaving in a hurry," Lorca predicted. "He is not the kind to take his troubles to the police or

to the Royal Navy. A secretive man, Tacolo, with a nice talent for smuggling aliens to Florida but no heart for a fight."

Gil nodded, eyes upon the effusive Lorca. To hear the man talk, the murder of Romanus might never have occurred.

"Shortly we will be free to uncover our pit and resume our digging," Lorca said. "I do not doubt there is food and water in plenty aboard that fine fishing cruiser. It would be simplest to abandon her once we reach the mainland with our money—or even without it. Any explanation to the authorities could involve us all in most tiresome complications. We don't even know whether her fishermen are imprisoned on the *Bernelle,* or on the bottom."

Gil nodded slowly. "We will dig now," he said. "But not in the hole down there on the beach."

"Where else?" Lorca asked quickly. "You think your calculations may be in error? Well, wherever you say, Captain."

"Thanks," said Gil. "You know, you and Romanus, between you, have strengthened a bright idea I had. The shrimper's timbers may be under our hole but there'll be no copper box in the ship."

"I do not understand," Lorca said plaintively "We stowed that box under the captain's bunk in his cabin aft. You mean someone has already—"

"March!" Gil commanded. "Along the ridge. Move!"

LORCA sighed and shrugged at such unreason. He started walking slowly through the thin bush. Sparks fell in behind him promptly. In single file they moved northward, crashing through the dry tangle of vines and foliage.

Just once Gil looked backward. The glance proved Lorca an accurate prophet.

Captain Tacolo had the *Bernelle* off the reef. Already she was feeling her way carefully around the end of Little Arido, headed seaward. Water gushing overside from her pumps proved that she had not gone unscathed by the coral. On the foredeck the dark brown members of Tacolo's crew were driving down into the hold the survivors, wet and dry, of Romanus' gang of waterfront thugs. Tacolo's sailors, armed with marlinspikes, rope's ends and clubs, were doing the job with considerable relish. Wherever Tacolo intended to land them it would not be a happy voyage.

Assured of that, Gil's eyes jumped ahead to a prominent tangle of round-leaved seagrape. Straggly as it was, and shot through with broken branches, that seagrape cluster was about the largest living thing on this waterless key.

"Stop here!" Gil said and stood over the spot where that morning he had found Lorca so thriftily concealing his canteen and food supplies.

With his foot Gil tapped the bit of driftwood Lorca had been using for a spade.

"Go on with your digging, Lorca," he commanded.

"Here?" said Lorca. His voice became most patronizing. "My dear captain! Here I was merely scraping out a hole in which to secrete—"

"Dig!" said Gil, harshly. "It's come to that!"

Lorca's quick eyes swept up to Gil's grim face and down to the gun he gripped by the barrel. He spread his hands in resignation, picked up his scraper and began slowly to deepen the hole.

"What's this, skipper?" Sparks muttered. "I don't get it."

"I think you will," Gil said. "Romanus was complaining that the shrimper didn't get under way fast enough. Perhaps that was because Lorca and her master, not so devoted to the Nazis as some others of her crew, had detoured to the key here."

Lorca lifted his head. "I assure you—" He ducked as the automatic swished past his ear.

"What was to stop the two of them from shoving that copper box holding the better part of a million bucks into a shallow hole under a seagrape?" Gil went on. "Wouldn't that explain why Lorca wasn't even scratched when Romanus, who had his own yearning for that box, opened fire on the shrimper and wiped out her whole crew. He wasn't on board. What do you say—am I right, Lorca?"

"I told you—" Lorca began.

"Dig while you talk," Gil said. He peered into the shallow hole. "More to the east'ard, Lorca. You seem to be sliding too much to the west. And not so deep. You didn't have time to go deep that night, even in soft sand. Have you hit something?"

"I have hit nothing but a root," Lorca said sullenly.

"It wasn't Lorca's intention to be marooned here on a waterless key," Gil told Sparks. "He swam back to the submarine and surrendered, too fast for Romanus to kill him out of hand. Back in Germany I suspect Lorca wriggled clear of Romanus' suspicions only with considerable help from his generalissimo's diplomats. Anyhow, he remained alive."

"He could talk himself out o' a lead casket," Sparks said. His eyes were fixed greedily on the hole.

*Lorca made no attempt to dodge but with both hands grabbed at Gil's automatic.*

"Well, let's say Lorca had his copper box buried. But on which of these innumerable keys he did not know. Romanus had kept that to himself. Why hadn't you asked the shrimper's master? A mistake?"

From the man in the pit there came no answer.

"So, when Lorca reached Cuba after the war he had to wait and to keep searching for Romanus. As he's told us, Romanus was methodically building up a completely different identity in some place we'll never locate. We know that when Romanus finally tackled Tacolo and assembled his thugs Lorca calmly joined him—or thought he had until Romanus sailed without him."

"Lorca didn't trust Romanus," Sparks said. "I can tell you that—and I didn't trust either of them." He licked his lips. "Go on, you, dig! I saw a piece of change in this, like I told you, and from what I heard, it wasn't nailed down by anybody. But how was I to know Romanus would run hog-wild—"

Lorca looked up. "And how was I to know?" he said. "We're all in this together, Captain; you, Sparks, myself. I—"

Gil pointed with his gun. "More to east'ard, Lorca! What's that—another root?"

Lorca scooped away. Then, abruptly, he threw down his scraper. He lifted a sweat-stained face, staring up with big peering eyes.

"It is a bone," he said sullenly. "This is a grave, Captain. I will dig no more. Shoot me if you will."

Gil stared into the hole at a grayish object sticking out of the sand. The landcrabs had been busy here; the bone was only a bone.

"So that's what happened to the shrimper's master," he said. "The regular pirate's touch, Lorca. You hid the box together and then you killed him, and let the hole serve a double purpose. Well, the man who buried him can dig him—"

With the speed of a whip Lorca caught at Gil's legs. Gil staggered forward, recovered. The edge of the hole crumbled under his weight.

He lost balance again and flung himself at Lorca as he fell.

Lorca made no attempt to dodge but with both hands grabbed at Gil's automatic. Flattened under Gil's body, unable to wrench the pistol from Gil's strong grip he managed to bend his wrist and deflect the muzzle of the gun. He held it that way, with all his strength exerted to do that one job, as Gil began to lift himself up.

"Sparks!" Lorca cried, fingers twisting the gun frantically. "An even split! Hit him!"

From above the hole where they struggled there was silence.

"The boat's easy!" Lorca cried. "Sure escape for us and half a million for you! Hit him! Half a million, man!"

Gil Wilcox ceased to struggle. "What are you waiting for, Sparks?" he asked. His voice was steady.

Sparks laughed hoarsely. He said, "A guy who was good at figures would say slug two and make it eight hundred grand."

He stepped down into the hole and wrenched the pistol from the contending fingers. He lifted it and slapped it hard against Mario Lorca's head.

Gil Wilcox stood up. "I didn't think I was thick enough to be hunting treasure with two crooks," he said.

"I'm in the clear with you?" Sparks asked.

Gil nodded. "And after we've turned Lorca in and got disinfected by the Nassau authorities you're in the split with Sam and me and a couple of kids back in Key West."

Sparks grinned broadly. He heaved the unconscious form of Mario Lorca out of the hole and hastily caught up Lorca's scraper.

"I'm nervous but not about bones," he said and started scraping manfully. In two minutes the thin wood snapped against metal.

It was a small copper box gone green with salt. Gil' sheath knife slit the thin metal and revealed methodical packets of used American greenbacks.

"So even a guy like Mario Lorca has to tell the truth once," Sparks said, riffling a stack of bills with hungry appreciation. "What say we go back and I slap this lettuce in Sam Gerrity's flat pan? I just got to tell him how honest I am."

# THE LONG ROLL

By C. HALL THOMPSON

THEY were kill-crazy Cheyenne. They came out of October sunup, down from raw buttes that walled in the Arickaree basin to north and south. There was no warning; no smoke signal spied by the dawn watch. Only a camp of sleeping cavalrymen and the silent paling of the sky. Then, they poured in on us like flood waters, screaming Cheyenne curses. One corporal died before he could roll out; the bullet tore away half his skull. Our chance for survival had dwindled to less than nothing.

The boot was on the other foot. Crouched behind a dead pony, firing blind, I thought: The great Army of the West that never makes a mistake! Lieutenant Corcoran and Sergeant Mac-

ILLUSTRATED BY
MONROE EISENBERG

*Choktaw whirled, his war bonnet gleaming. I fired from the hip.*

Canles liked to believe that. Only, now, believing was hard. Corcoran had meant us to be the attackers, not the trapped.

The day we quit Fort Wallace, Corcoran looked hard and tall in the saddle. We would wipe out these Cheyenne marauders that terrorized Kansas settlers, he said. No more horse thefts or children's brains bashed out against rocks; no more white women raped and left naked to die of exposure. We believed him. We felt the power of carbines in our fists, heard swords creak against saddleleather, and swore we'd follow a man like Corcoran to hell and back.

We followed him. Three days, searching plains and creekbeds for signs of Cheyenne. Three days, wanting to fight and finding no enemy but raw wind and ground too damp for sleeping. Then, on the fourth morning, we struck the trail of a small Indian party.

It didn't look like much; only the prints of several ponies cutting west along the Arickaree shallows. It led us through a sheer-walled pass into a wide canyon. There, the signs changed. The furrows of many lodge-poles scored white dust. Uneasily, someone muttered, "Looks like a whole Cheyenne village."

Up front, Corcoran talked with MacCanles; the sergeant nodded. Corcoran twisted to face the men. "If we go back now for reinforcements we may never lay hands on them." We knew what he meant. The odds were against us; but we were going to buck them. Maybe to the others it sounded like courage. To me it sounded like suicide.

AT SUNDOWN, we pitched camp on the north bank. Tomorrow, we would ride on the Cheyenne. Surprise would tilt things in our favor. The plan sounded good. It left out one consideration. The Cheyenne knew we were on their tail. They had led us into ambush, and waited only for dawn to cut us down.

I slept badly. A distempered, penetrating wind crawled down from the buttes. Mules brayed sadly. Restless horses stomped. I dozed . . . Then, abruptly, the kill-cry of a charging buck tore the stillness. I rolled out. Beside me, a towheaded kid named Judd blinked sleepily. And, at the heart of the camp, a figure stood dark against the pallid sky. Dykes, the drummer, was sounding the long roll—the call to arms.

Indian screams closed in; MacCanles stalked our low breastwork barking Corcoran's orders. Men sprawled belly-down, firing carbines with cold precision. Sleep was gone; we were awake now. Wide awake to the shrill of a chestnut gone wild with entrails dragging from a slit stomach; to the sudden silent drop of a regular who caught a barbed arrow square in the center of his forehead. I saw a man's face split in two by a tomahawk. I saw a brave get a rifle-blast full in the chest. In the next two days, I saw the kind of thing nobody ever forgets.

It seemed longer. Days and nights end. There was no end to the tide of painted ponies, nor the dead stillness between attacks; no silencing of the moaning wounded, untended because the company surgeon had died the first night with a Cheyenne bullet in his lung. Lieutenant Corcoran got his in the left leg; dead-white, splintered thighbone jutted through torn muscle. Corcoran sat propped against a tree and went on giving orders. There weren't many to give. Rations were nearly gone; ammunition might last through one more assault. There was nothing to do but wait. And listen to Dykes' drum.

He never let up. Through the gunsmoke of a charge, you could see Dykes, erect, cool as a statue, sounding the long roll. The steady rumbling ate at your nerves. The regulars were used to it; one of us greenhorns was bound to break. It happened to be Judd.

At noon on the third day, there was a lull. I lay against the breastwork that fronted the northern buttes, Judd hunched in the trench, staring at the glass eyes of a rotting mule. We did not talk. We breathed decay and waited to become part of it. With Sergeant MacCanles, it was different.

A sandy beard matted his square jaw; he shifted a plug and spat yellow over the barricade of dead men. His cool gray eyes studied the crevices of the northern buttes.

"They strike from them hills, next. Choktaw's a smart chief; Cheyenne'd follow him to Kingdom-come. Still, red-

skins is superstitious. Ten to one, if we killed Choktaw, if they lost their leader, they'd retreat—for good. . ."

It was calm, like a man figuring a chess move. MacCanles didn't even hear the crazy tattoo of that drum.

Judd did. His lower lip was chewed raw. He held the carbine so tight his knuckles looked like naked bone. Bloodshot eyes swung to Dykes; all at once, Judd's face fell apart. He clutched MacCanles' sleeve.

"Shut him up, Sarge! Make him stop!"

MacCanles caught hold of the narrow shoulders. "Easy, son. . ."

Judd lunged for Dykes. MacCanles held on and shook, hard.

"Make him stop! For God's sake. . ."

A backhand lashed across the kid's mouth.

I said, "Take it easy."

"You stay out of this."

The boy froze, shocked to silence. Then, heavily, he sat down. He hid his face, but you could see the frail body retching. MacCanles pressed his shoulder. Judd did not look up.

"He's got to sound the drum, son. It's a signal for relief."

"Relief!" The word was sour in my mouth. "Ain't you heard, Sergeant? Relief never comes."

MacCanles said, "Shut up, Ives."

"And the drum. You think they can hear it at a fort that's over three days' ride from here?"

For a second, the sergeant's eyes held mine. Then, he turned away. The nagging drum went on. Calmly, MacCanles scanned the northern canyons. Thin lips curved in a vaguely contented smile.

"You're green, Ives. Maybe you never heard about the long roll. Old regulars say a real Army man hears that drum no matter how far off it is. He knows when his buddies are in a scrape. And he comes. Just like relief will come from the Fort. Just like it always comes. . ."

He spoke to me, but the others listened. Judd raised a tear-stained face; he swallowed MacCanles' line the way a kid would read an answer from Santa Claus. It seemed like a rotten trick.

I said, "That's the Army for you. Bad grub, wet blankets, death-traps. And while you wait to die, they feed you fairy tales!"

Judd's mouth quivered. Men tensed, watching MacCanles. He came toward me deliberately. I could hear him breathing. He said, "Loyalty ain't a fairy tale."

"Loyalty!" I started to turn away. "Don't be a damn fool."

A big fist caught my sleeve. I saw the right coming and got under it. My knuckles dug into blue tunic. It winded MacCanles; he rocked. I brought the left up, hard. He stumbled and all but fell. The square face was dark. He started to close in, then stopped.

Slowly, he straightened from the crouch. He looked tall and wide and somehow, just standing there quiet, he was more impressive than if he had struck back. I said, "Your move, Sergeant. Turn me in. Call it insubordination."

The drum shuddered. Then men stared, waiting. Finally, gently, MacCanles said, "Out here, it's not officers and men, Ives. Just men. All human enough to make mistakes. The Army knows that."

"The Army knows everything! But do they know common sense? Do they know they'll be bucking hundreds of Cheyenne to save thirty white scalps? And if they do, will they be crazy enough to listen to your toy drum?"

"They'll hear it. They'll come."

I didn't get a chance to laugh. A thin wolf-cry echoed through the north canyons. Somebody said, "Jesus!" Judd's eyes were too wide. Lieutenant Corcoran bellowed hoarse orders. Dykes' drum got loud and angry.

I shot MacCanles a bitter glance. "Well, they better be damn quick about it!"

He wasn't listening. Crouched by the breastwork, he watched Indian ponies stream from dim northern passes. Behind us, Corcoran roared, "Wait till they're close and make every shot count!" We waited. Judd wiped blurred eyes impatiently and hunched over his gunsight. Somewhere, a wounded man was saying his prayers.

THE Cheyenne came in two wild rivers of man and horseflesh. Frenzied bucks screamed for hair. Corcoran's "Fire!" was lost in the first blast

from our barricade. Animals screeched and scattered, wheeling to comé on again. And in the lead, huge and bronze, dryed buffalo robe flaring from massive shoulders, the war bonnet that made him immortal flashing like a peacock's tail, rode Choktaw.

I tried to hit him. So did MacCanles; he swore when he missed. I took aim for a second shot. I never made it.

Yards to the right, a coup-crazy buck had vaulted his pony over the breastwork; he whirled and bore down on Judd's back, barbed spear lifted for the kill. I was between him and the kid. I rolled flat on my back and squeezed the trigger. Flailing hooves grazed my chest; the pony kept going, riderless. The Indian had lurched from his saddle. He struggled to his feet; blood splotched his belly. He lunged toward Judd. I fired again. I didn't see him fall.

For a second, I didn't see anything. The vise of a sinewed arm on my windpipe blinded me. A brutal knee dug into my spine. The arm tightened; I gagged. The Cheyenne's fingers knotted in my hair. White-hot sun winked on his knife. The edge sliced across my hairline. Hot blood trickled down my forehead. I felt sick and dizzy.

Then the buck screamed. A blurred figure came at us from the right. MacCanles' teeth looked vicious through matted beard. The Indian let go of me, spinning to meet his charge. The stained knife-hand rose. MacCanles caught the wrist. The rest wasn't pretty. Violently, he twisted the arm back and something tore in the Indian's shoulder. He sagged. MacCanles had the knife; he drove it hilt-deep in the swollen neck. The Cheyenne bled like a stuck pig. Finally he lay still, face down in the red, wet dust.

MacCanles stood over the body. His eyes held mine. Before I could find words, the time for them was past. We heard the trumpet.

It came like the sweet horn at a gospel meeting, warm and true and full of the hope of living. Men looked up dazedly and fire from our barricade died. Judd cried, "It's the relief!" Fresh horses streamed through the eastern pass. Men shouted and laughed; an old regular swore a blue streak. And, propped against the breastwork of mutilated bodies, a wounded Irishman murmured, "Holy, Mary, Mother of God," over and over.

The Cheyenne were caught flatfooted. Confused bucks reined in and contraband Henry Repeaters lost bead. At the head of his column, a major lifted one arm. An angry trumpet sounded the charge. Indians wheeled, looking to Choktaw. For a moment, the Chief sat like cut rock in the saddle; then, roaring a command, he reined about, facing north. Wildly, the Cheyenne hit out for the northern buttes.

The relief detachment followed into ragged passes, firing deliberately. Indian mounts stumbled; braves spilled under grinding hooves. From the barricade, we covered the rout with fifty-caliber rounds, cutting down Cheyenne who doubled back. The relief lost their trail in shadowing canyons and at nightfall the major led his men into our camp. He told Corcoran the Cheyenne were gone for good.

The dead were buried. A Scottish medical officer attended the wounded. My scalp had stopped bleeding; he told me stories as he stitched the cut with coarse gut. And he told me what had brought the relief. Two nights ago, the lieutenant had sent four scouts through the Cheyenne lines. One reached Fort Wallace; his arm was broken; he had lost an earlobe; he passed out just after delivering Corcoran's dispatch.

I picked my way through squatted soldiers who gnawed hard tack and swilled bitter coffee. My head throbbed; inside, a nasty voice whispered: So a regular answers the long roll no matter where he is—that's funny, real funny. I could still hear the voice when I reached MacCanles' lean-to.

Under the tent-fly, men laughed with the sergeant and drank rum from a keg brought in by the relief. Over the hubbub, Judd yelled, "I got a real toast to make. Here's to the man that reached Fort Wallace!"

They cheered; my voice fell cold across the bright sound.

"Ain't you heard, kid? Nobody reached the Fort." I smiled thinly at MacCanles. "You know what brought that rescue squad? The sergeant's drum."

It was a great joke. Nobody laughed.

Dark wind stirred the tent-fly. I didn't like the silence; their mouths were too stiff. I stood still, facing MacCanles. Slowly, the others shifted and scattered. None of them looked back. The sergeant did not move. I couldn't quite meet his stare. Keeping my tone level wasn't easy. "You saved my neck. I'm obliged."

MacCanles swung back, facing me square.

"Don't thank me." His voice was hard. "The Army saved you. That fairy tale called Army loyalty, remember?"

I raised taunting eyebrows. "Now comes the eyewash about things too big to put into words. Loyalty, morale, the line that hooks the suckers. . . Well, it won't hook me, Sergeant. You don't know me."

"You're wrong. I know your kind, all right. The bitter boys that carry a civilian rig hid in their packs. . ."

His voice was low, cutting. "Tell me, Ives—when do you figure to go over the hill?"

It was like a whipbutt exploding behind my ear. Cold sweat came out under my eyes.

"I've seen too many like you to miss one, Ives. They join for a meal and a bunk, or to hide from John Law or a woman. One thing sure—they never join because they want to be Army men. . . I'm curious. Why did you enlist?"

Defiance welled in my chest. My face went brazen.

"All right. I'm not here for big words and high ideals. That was my brother's reason in 'Sixty-five. What'd it get him? A stump for a right leg and a medal that couldn't buy peanuts. . . That's not for me, Sergeant. I'm in for something big."

"Such as. . .?"

"A chance to move West. Why stay hooked for a song and a prayer in the Army when there's a fortune out here, asking to be claimed? Cattle, silver, gold—everything, just waiting for boys hard enough to take it."

"And you're one of those boys."

"You got it. I'm sick of your great cavalry life. This is where I get off. You asked when. I'll tell you. Tonight."

It got quiet. In the night chill, the laughter of men around the chuckfire seemed far away. We stood in the lea of the tent-flap; no one could see us; no one could hear. MacCanles got out a clay pipe and filled it with slow care. In the match flare his eyes were cold.

He said, "I could turn you in. Deserters end in front of a firing squad."

I rested a hand on the Colt in my cartridge belt.

"You could turn me in," I said. "You could die. Tonight. Now."

MacCanles drew on the pipe. Knotty jaws worked. I smiled.

"You won't talk."

He didn't say anything.

"Army loyalty!" I laughed. "Even an old regular has his price. Some want money. Others like to live."

The pipe quivered in the sudden grip of his teeth. He wanted to push my face in. He only shook his head.

"You know a gun never shut me up."

"No? Then why the sudden change of heart?"

MacCanles shrugged. "Call it memory. You risked your hide to save Judd. You didn't have to take the chance, but you took it. . .You've been kicked around, Ives. You think you're hard, nothing can touch you. Words like loyalty are fairy tales. But a man can always change his mind."

I said, "Some men—not me."

And I left.

CORCORAN'S orders came. In the morning, we would head through East Pass for Fort Wallace. It would be slow going; able men would be burdened with wounded. But there was no call to fret. Choktaw was gone for good. The backtrail was clear and safe. After mess, talk dwindled. Gratefully, men bedded down. The fire went low. In time, only an occasional unworried snore rose in dark stillness.

I didn't sleep. I lay waiting. I tried to forget MacCanles and think of tailored clothes and fancy ladies and money flowing like a spring freshet across the monte tables. No more risking everything for nothing; it was smart to cut free while I was still breathing. They changed watches at midnight. I was glad. The waiting was over.

A corporal called Messner took over the east hillock. It was a break. Messner was always first to answer the trumpet's

charge. He was too dumb to ask questions. I said softly, "Going to scout the buttes; Lieutenant's orders." He winked and said, "Good luck," in German. It was that easy.

In moonless dark, I crossed the Arickaree basin to the eastern canyons. Nobody stopped me. But, all the time, I had a feeling I was watched from the shadow of MacCanles' lean-to. And I was sweating.

A crazy idea struck me. Heading north into a black ravine, I felt suddenly lonely. I wanted to look back, but I didn't. The chuckfire would seem distant; I missed the nearness and safety of other men. Here, only shale whimpered under a jackrabbit's hop and a chill wind brushed naked rock walls. I shivered and tried a laugh. It sounded hollow. Maybe it was the emptiness, all around and inside me. The nearest settlement was a long stint on foot. I pushed on into the pass. Rounding the second bend, I saw the pony.

A dappled paint with a bearskin saddle, it stood alone in a small clearing. I hugged the canyon wall, watching. Nothing. Only the wind and the pony grazing. I didn't like it. Cheyenne spies came on horseback; from these buttes, they could watch the camp, knowing that, come dawn Corcoran's company would move through East Pass. Choktaw liked a neat ambush. Caught in that narrow crevice, bogged down with wounded, MacCanles and his men would be clay pigeons.

My mind said, Cut it out. This pony could be a stray, left behind in the Cheyenne retreat. Sure. Just a stray. Besides, now I could ride to the settlement. Why turn a bit of luck into something to fret over? I hitched my pack to the bearhide cinch, mounted, and headed north. It was odd, but the farther I got from camp the colder it seemed.

Sunup bled into the sky. Beyond the buttes, I cut trail across misted Kansas plains. I was saddlesore and the sun didn't warm me. Somehow, I hated to see it rise. I didn't let myself wonder why. Irritably, I spurred the paint. We had topped a steep rise when the sound came.

I reined in sharply. A long minute passed. Sweat gummed my palms. My head ached with listening. Then, it came again—a distant, angry rumble, like summer thunder.

Or the long roll of a drum.

It couldn't be. I was miles from bivouac. Still, on my right, a bleary sun edged into view and if Choktaw's braves had set an ambush in East Pass. . . Sound could carry far on still, cold air.

I cursed out loud and urged the pony on. What if the Cheyenne did strike again? It wasn't my funeral. I was smart. Hooves thundered and dust caked my eyelids and nostrils. But nothing shut out the lonely chatter of Dykes' drum. Don't be a fool, I thought. Even you did go back, what good could one more man do? It was laughable. One man against Choktaw. . .

That was how the idea hit me, cold and clear, and then I was no longer running; I was remembering laughter in the barracks at Fort Wallace; remembering friendly pipesmoke and a sense of belonging and a little guy named Spitz who loaned me his blanket the bitter night I came down with chills on my first bivouac. Remembering Judd and MacCanles and a few words dropped at random that suddenly, now, gave me the answer at last. I knew what one man could do.

Wheeling the paint, I cut into the backtrail.

I came in across the crest of the Northern buttes. Above the line of fire, the pale air was sour with gunsmoke. Carbines snapped like cornered wolves; shells whined. Ahead, abruptly, the trail dropped into the mouth of East Pass. My chest felt tight; I cursed myself for a sentimental jackass. But, inside, there was a new warm excitement.

Blue uniforms crouched behind jutting rocks. Corcoran bellowed; MacCanles relayed the orders sharply. The roll of Dykes' drum roared up through the canyon.

There were more wounded; more dead sprawled in the stained dust. Choktaw's first charges had taken toll.

The Cheyenne had withdrawn to gather like circling vultures on a rise east of the Pass. Ponies chafed, anxious for the next onslaught. Eagerly, the red regiment lined up; out front, astride a great palomino, Choktaw raised a warn-

ing arm. MacCanles yelled, "Here she comes, boys!"

My mind worked fast.

That memory of the sergeant's words got loud in my ears. "Indians are mighty superstitious. Get Choktaw and they'd hightail it for good." Get Choktaw, I thought. Choktaw who would lead the attack, a perfect target for the man who met the charge halfway and drew dead bead. I hunched close to the paint's mane and dug in the spurs. Choktaw's arm fell. The Cheyenne surged forward, as my pony tore downtrail to the mouth of the Pass.

Men shouted hoarsely and MacCanles roared, "Ives! You crazy bastard!" Then, "Cover him with fire!" Carbines opened up viciously. I lunged into the Cheyenne tide.

They saw me coming. Bucks wheeled, trying for aim. I passed too quickly. A spearhead grazed my shoulder. Stickiness drained down my arm. I held the Colt ready. Shouldering through the swell of painted flesh, my pony faced Choktaw's. A brave dove at me from the saddle. I clubbed him with the gunbarrel. Choktaw whirled, his war bonnet gleaming wildly. I fired from the hip. The first shot tore his throat and he screamed. I squeezed the trigger three times fast. He jolted under the impact of the slugs. I didn't wait to see him fall. I yanked the reins; the paint reared and spun. The safety of the Pass looked very far away.

A few Cheyenne stuck to my tail. Henry Repeaters snapped and, ahead, men screamed, "Give 'er the spur!" I did. A shell ripped the paint's flank and she spilled forward; I sprawled in the grit, stumbling up in a running crouch. Bullets raised dust-puffs too near for comfort. I made the breastwork and hands hauled me over. The Cheyenne didn't come closer. Judd cut down the nearest. The others turned tail.

I was breathing in gasps. Grit burned my eyes. But, I saw the tide check, confused, staring at the trampled form of Choktaw. I heard the screeched order. The Cheyenne struck out across rolling plains toward the sun. Hands clapped me on the shoulder and someone yelped, "You did it, baby! You did it!" I saw MacCanles grin at me and wink. I winked back.

Nobody mentioned desertion. Corcoran shook my hand, smiling wryly from MacCanles to me. "Glad to have you back, Mr. Ives." That was all. Nothing had changed. Crossing the flatlands to the Fort and later, in the warm tobacco-smelling barracks, I was just one of the men. They laughed and stood me drinks and asked questions. Then, squatted by the potbellied stove, Judd said, "How'd you know that there was trouble at the Pass?"

MacCanles drew on that burnt clay pipe. I looked at him steadily.

"I heard Dykes' drum."

The men were suddenly silent. They exchanged quick glances. They had the look of men who have seen the impossible done. A few smiled; odd smiles, at once a little sad and content. Slowly, MacCanles knocked out the pipe. His voice was soft.

"Dykes caught a Cheyenne bullet in the forehead. He never had time to sound the long roll. . ."

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# FOUR BLIND MEN

By
FREDRIC BROWN

I WAS sitting in Cap Gurney's office and we were batting the breeze about nothing in particular and homicide in general. That's Gurney's department—Homicide. Not committing it, but getting the guys who do. He's good at it, too, damn good.

"A clue," Gurney said, "is the most meaningless thing there is. Nine times out of ten it points the wrong way. It helps fill in a picture, though. See what I mean?"

I said, "Like the blind men and the elephant. Know that old one?"

"No. Should I?"

I said, "You might as well. Four blind men went up to touch an elephant to see what one was like. One touched his trunk and thought an elephant was like a snake; one touched his tail and fig-

ILLUSTRATED BY EARLE WINSLOW

*Mutt was leaning against the wall, staring down at what had been the ringmaster.*

ured an elephant was like a rope; one got his hands against the elephant's side and thought it was like a wall, and the fourth one got his hands around one of the elephant's legs and thought an elephant was like a tree. They argued about it the rest of their lives."

"Uh-huh," said Gurney. "Now that you tell it, I had heard it. But it's good. It holds water."

"A lot of water," I said. "I carried water for one once when I was a kid, to get tickets to the circus. Twenty buckets, unless they changed elephants on me."

Gurney didn't even grin. "It points up what I meant. A clue doesn't mean anything; it's like what *one* of those blind men got hold of and—"

The phone rang and Gurney picked it up. He said, "Yeah" about ten times at intervals and then for a change he said, "O.K.," and put the receiver back.

He said, "Talking about circuses, there's a guy dead over at the winter quarters of Harbin-Wilson Shows. Shot. Ringmaster. Some funny angles. Mutt and Jeff are handling it, and that was Mutt on the phone. He wants me to come over."

He was closing up his desk and putting on his coat while he talked, and I put on mine. He said, "Want to come along?" and I said, "Sure," and we went down and got in his car.

Mutt, I might explain, is Walter Andrews and he's called that because his partner is Jeff Kranich and Jeff's a little guy and Andrews is tall, so naturally they call them Mutt and Jeff.

IN THE car, Gurney said, "He was killed with a blank cartridge. A thirty-two caliber blank cartridge out of the pistol he used in the ring. There are some funny angles."

I said, "That one's funny enough."

"Muzzle of the gun was held to his temple," Cap said. "Even a blank shoots a wad and even if it didn't, with the muzzle jammed tight against a man's temple, the blast alone would kill him."

"Could it be suicide, Cap?"

"Could be," Gurney said. "Gun was in his hand, but it could have been put there. Paraffin test to see if there were powder marks on his hand won't mean anything because there will be anyway. It was a new gun, bought this afternoon, and he'd fired a round of blanks just to try it out, Mutt says. Then he reloaded it."

"But Mutt doesn't think it's suicide," I said, "or he wouldn't have called you. Why isn't it?"

"Some funny angles. Three shots were fired out of the gun. All at the time of the murder. It's hard to picture a man shooting off two blanks in the air and then the third into his temple. It doesn't make sense."

I said, "It doesn't make any more sense for a murderer to have done it. How do they know the three shots were all fired at the time of the murder, if it was a murder."

"Two people heard 'em," Gurney said. "The three shots were within a space of ten seconds. Guy named Ambers heard 'em from about fifty feet away, out in the arena. He's an animal man. A keeper I mean, not a trainer. He was dozing and they woke him up. A watchman heard 'em, from the floor above—he says. One other guy was in the building—a bookkeeper, working late in the office. Says he didn't hear any shots, and that could be because the office was fairly far away."

Gurney braked to a stop for a red light. He could have turned on his flasher and gone on through, but he never did that unless there was a real hurry. I guess he figured the dead ringmaster would wait till we got there.

I said, "I still say it doesn't make any more sense for a murderer to fire two extra shots—with blanks—than for a suicide. You didn't answer that."

"No, I didn't," Gurney said. "Because I don't know. But Mutt says suicide's practically out of the question, and that's why he wanted me over there. He didn't tell me how he figured suicide is out."

He stopped the car and started jockeying it into a parking space. He said, "The ringmaster's name was Sopronowicz. Everybody under him hated his guts because he was an all-around louse. A sadist. The kind of guy anybody might want to kill, even with a blank cartridge.

"Any one of the three men in the building at the time might have done it,

far as reason is concerned. Especially Ambers, the animal keeper. Sopronowicz was cruel to animals, and Ambers loves 'em. Ambers admits he'd liked to have killed him, but says he didn't. And there aren't any powder marks on his hands."

"How about the others?"

"Watchman is named Carle. He's Sopronowicz's father-in-law. There could be a motive there, even though Sopronowicz got him the job. The bookkeeper's name is Golde. Sopronowicz—"

"Let's just call him Soppy, from now on," I suggested.

"The ringmaster had arguments with Golde over bookkeeping. He had a slight percentage interest in the circus, and thought he was being cheated on his statements."

"Nice guy," I said.

Gurney said, "Everybody loved him." We got out of the car and started for the entrance of the building.

"Used to be a skating rink," Gurney told me. "Harbin-Wilson has used it for winter quarters for years now. You've heard of 'em?"

"Small circus, isn't it? A one-ring outfit that plays the smaller towns and some fairs, the way I've heard it. But getting back to friend Soppy, Cap—"

"You know everything I do," Gurney interrupted me. "All I know's what Mutt told me, and you know that now."

The door was locked and he hammered on it until Jeff opened it. Jeff said, "Hi, Cap. Hi, Fred. Come on, this way. It's in a room off the arena."

We followed him down the hall and through a door that led to a high-ceilinged room almost big enough for a football field. You could see that it had been planned, originally, for an ice rink, although it looked more like the inside of a circus tent now. There was a clear space in the middle, with a ring laid out below, and trapezes and other aerial apparatus above. The animals were at the far end, and the place smelled like a circus, too—a very stale circus. There were a dozen horses in stalls, a somewhat frowzy elephant, and a couple of mangy big cats in cages.

The elephant started across the concrete floor to meet us and a wizened little gray-haired man pulled her back gently with a bull-hook.

"That's Ambers," Jeff said. "The little one. The big one is an elephant."

"Thanks," I said. "That all the menagerie they got?"

"All the performing ones. A few more that go along for show don't join up till they hit the road. Couple of weeks from now. There's where the stiff is."

Jeff Kranich was pointing to a double doorway that led off the main arena. Both doors were wide open, hooked back against the wall. Through them we could see the body lying on the floor, back against a door on the far side of the room past the double doorway.

MUTT was leaning gloomily against the wall, staring down at what had been the ringmaster. He didn't greet us; he just started talking. He said, "It makes nuts. I haven't moved a thing, Cap, except to lift his hand and put it down again in the same position. Three shells fired, all right. And we've questioned the only three men we know to have been in the building and their stories sound O.K., except that they were far apart and none of 'em can alibi the others."

Gurney said, "You said it wouldn't be suicide. Got a good reason?"

"Plenty good," Mutt said. "The guy was happy. He just picked a four-leaf clover. Golde—that bookkeeper—tells me he was getting a full partnership in the show when the season started. Walker died last year, and Harbin made Sopronowicz the offer. The show's in the black. He'd have cleared thirty-forty thousand or more this coming season, more money than he ever had before. He was in good shape physically; just passed an insurance exam yesterday. And everybody I've talked to says he was so cheerful the last few days he was twice as mean as usual. Ambers says the bull's got hook-marks to prove it; he was working the bull early this evening along with the trainer, a guy named Standish.

"He wasn't broke; he's got over two hundred bucks in his wallet. And suddenly he kills himself for no reason at all? Nuts."

Gurney was looking around the room. There wasn't much in it. A big wardrobe cabinet on one side, closed and pad-

locked. Two closed trunks and two folding chairs, both lying on their sides.

"Chairs were knocked over that way?" Gurney asked.

Mutt nodded. "I didn't move anything that I didn't move back. I been questioning people and getting nowhere. It makes nuts."

"Who found him?" Gurney wanted to know.

"Ambers. But not right away. He was off the arena in a room that has a bunk in it down near the other end. He was taking a nap; says it's O.K. for him to do that because he's on damn near twenty-four hour duty here. He heard three shots, but figured Sopronowicz was just trying the gun again; didn't think much of it. But he couldn't go back to sleep again and twenty minutes or so later—that's his guess—he came back out into the arena and wandered down to this end of it to get something. He saw the body lying there when he passed that double doorway."

Gurney asked, "How about Carle, the watchman?"

"Heard the shots from the floor above where he was making the rounds. Didn't think anything of it for the same reason Ambers didn't. Says about half an hour after he heard 'em, Ambers came hunting him and told him to phone the police. That would fit, for time. And Golde still didn't know about it till we got here. Neither Ambers nor Carle went back to the office rooms to tell him."

"How do they figure it, or do they?"

"They don't, except they're sure it isn't suicide. Carle especially. Says Sopronowicz had a yellow streak a foot wide down his back, and that the only person on earth who couldn't possibly shoot Sopronowicz was Sopronowicz. Besides, they both knew about the partnership and the big luck it was for him to get it."

Gurney jerked his thumb at the door—the only door in the room aside from the open double doorway. "Was that bolted like it is now?"

"Yeah," Mutt said. "Bolted from this side. And it's a tight bolt. I could just barely get it open to see what was through there. It's a hallway. I bolted it again."

I looked around again and then walked back to the arena. I walked down to where Ambers and the animals were. The wizened little man was using a currycomb on a beautiful palomino gelding.

He looked around at me. "Got it doped out yet?" he wanted to know.

"They haven't," I said.

"Good. Hope they don't. Ever."

"You got it doped out?" I asked him.

"Me? Hell no. But if I did, I sure wouldn't tell anybody."

"The law says you should."

He chuckled. "Don't tell me the law, son. I read Blackstone once when I was young. It didn't take, but I remember one thing. You got to tell what you know, but you don't got to tell what you think or guess. Now run along and peddle your marbles."

I didn't run along and peddle my marbles, but I did wander back toward the others. I passed Mutt coming out of the doorway of the death room. I went in and Gurney was leaning against the wall at the same spot where Mutt had been leaning, staring thoughtfully down at the body.

I asked him. "Mind if I straighten one of these chairs?"

Gurney said, "Go ahead." I put one of the chairs right side up and sat down on it. I asked him, "Got an idea?" and he said "Yeah."

I asked "What?" and he didn't answer. So I tried to get an idea myself and I didn't.

Then Mutt came in, with a kind of funny look on his face, and he nodded at Gurney.

Gurney said, "Good. You can wind it up then, you and Jeff." He turned to me and said, "Come on, Fred. Let's go."

"You got it?" I asked him.

"Yeah. Come on; let's have a beer and I'll tell you about it!"

But he didn't, right away, even after we had the beers in front of us.

He said, "To crime," and we took a drink. Then he said, "You solved it, you know. That story about the four blind men."

"All right," I said, "so you want to be coy for a while. So I'll help you by floundering around myself. Here's what I've got—or haven't got.

"I don't think it was suicide because

there wasn't any reason for suicide and plenty of reasons against it. So there was a killer and he came in through the open doorway because the door to the hall was tightly bolted on the inside. Want me to play all of the four blind men for you?"

"Go ahead."

I SAID, "The chairs were both knocked over, so there was a struggle. But I saw, as well as you did, that his hair wasn't mussed, except right over the right temple, from the blast. And his shirt wasn't rumpled and his waxed mustache wasn't mussed. So, said the second blind man, there wasn't a struggle."

I took another sip of beer. I said, "The killer was pretty clever, since there wasn't a struggle, to get hold of the gun and trick Soppy into letting him hold the muzzle to his temple. It would have to be by trickery unless Soppy was asleep. But the killer wasn't very clever or he wouldn't have gummed up things by firing two extra shots. They gummed the suicide hypothesis, even if lack of motive for suicide didn't. And yet, said the fourth blind man, the killer tried to make it look like suicide by putting the gun in Soppy's hands. As the fifth blind man, the one named Mutt, says, it makes nuts."

Gurney said, "Your trouble is with the blind men. You took the story from the wrong end. You missed the whole point of the story you told me."

"Yeah?" I said. "And what was the point?"

"The point of the story was that it was an elephant," Gurney said.

He took a long draught of his beer and put the glass down empty. He signalled the bartender, and then he said, "What happened is simple. The elephant wasn't staked out; you saw that. It happened to wander down to the door of the room where Sopronowicz was doing something or other. It saw him, and neither Ambers nor the trainer was around and it recalled whatever cruel treatment it had ever had at Soporonowicz's hands. And Sopronowicz didn't have a bull-hook, either.

"It started through the double doorway to get him, and what happened from there on in took about ten seconds. The ringmaster saw death lumbering through the double doorway from the arena and he did the best he could. He fired a blank in the bull's face to scare it and the bull kept coming. One or the other of them knocked over the chairs; probably the elephant, because the chairs were right there inside the double door.

"Sopronowicz fired another shot, probably as he reached the single doorway that he could have got through and the elephant couldn't. But it was bolted and the bolt stuck and anyway it opened toward him and he couldn't have made it before the elephant got him.

"And—well, it isn't pleasant, I guess, to be killed by an elephant. You get all your bones broken and maybe a blunt tusk through your guts, and maybe you last thirty seconds and maybe three minutes, but it's a bad thirty seconds or three minutes.

"In the last second, he saved himself that. Probably the elephant's trunk was going around him when he put the muzzle to his temple and pulled the trigger. So he falls down dead and the elephant probably sniffs at him with the end of his trunk and sees—or smells, or knows somehow—that he's dead, and lets it go at that. And he goes back about his business."

"It could be," I said. "It makes sense. But—"

"But nothing," Gurney said. "While you were jawing with Ambers I remembered your story about the elephant and got the answer. So I sent Mutt to check, with a little paraffin, if there were powder marks on the elephant's face and trunk. When he came back and nodded that there were, that was that. So thanks for the story."

I finished my beer and ordered another one apiece for us.

I said, "You still miss the *point* of the story, though. It was the conflicting impressions the blind men got, each from touching a different part of the critter. The fact that it was an elephant wasn't the point of the story at all, damn it."

Gurney said. "But just the same, it *was* an elephant."

"Nuts," I said. And we drank our beer.

# THE HONORABLE MISSING PYRAMID

By

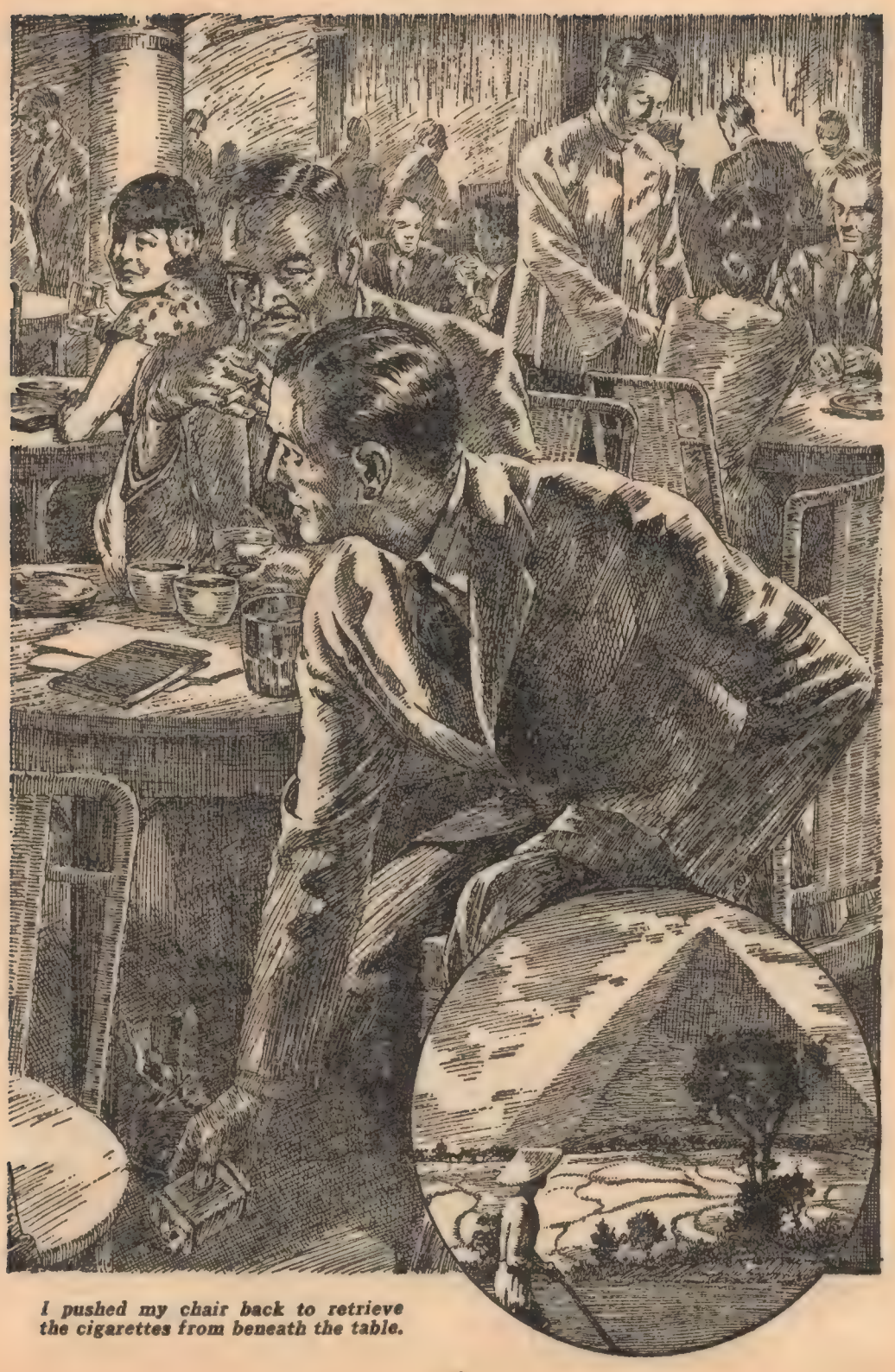
JAMES NORMAN

ILLUSTRATED BY
L. STERNE STEVENS

CH'INMING is a day for sweeping graves. Throughout China there is a great deal of filial loitering around family plots on this spring holiday. At Sianfu in the northwest, where the concentration of ancestors has had some four thousand years head start, the Sweeping Graves Festival assumes the proportions of a national convention.

When the CNAC transport delivered me at Sianfu's brown unkempt airport, I felt there must be some obscure symbolism in my arriving on this day to investigate the murder of Professor Trend. I wondered if I'd be confronted with the usual assortment of bland attitudes toward death which the Chinese so expertly display. They have a genius for underrating and understating death.

No one met me at the airport. I didn't expect anyone for Ch'inming was in full swing. Each April at the third moon,



*I pushed my chair back to retrieve the cigarettes from beneath the table.*

the governors, the generals and the important people are completely absorbed in looking for the graves of their ancestors, and drinking a little over them. Sianfu's police were undoubtedly out sweeping graves, too.

I took a blue-hooded Sian cart in from the field. From within such a vehicle you not only see this ancient capital of China slowly unfold and envelop you—you taste it.

SIANFU tastes of dust. The air is glazed with it. A ceaseless loess dust blows down from the Gobi. It colors the thirty miles of gigantic medieval walls surrounding the curved-roofed, dwarfish houses of the city. The dust is always packed hardest under the four huge Tartar and Mongol gates which had once greeted Genghis Khan. When mixed with the proper portions of sunlight and shadow, the dust breeds the city's old familiar odors; the stench of perpetual anonymity, of decay and growth, of murder and intrigue.

The cart brought me through a tiered gateway and down streets alive with flaunting banners to the administrative *Yamen*. Here, beyond a smaller gate guarded by the inevitable snarling stone lions, were the offices, courtroom, prison and quarters of the Provincial Police Chief. The headquarters building wore the dreary stamp of all municipal offices whether they be in Liverpool or Sianfu. The whitewashed walls of the rooms within were hung with pictures: a cinemaized portrait of Sun Yat Sen, faded posters and a new-style Chinese calendar displaying an almond-eyed actress.

A blue-gowned clerk at the only occupied desk in the office looked up at me eagerly.

"May I trouble your chariot?" I began the usual polite formalities.

He responded with, "I open my heart." We went through the book, and then I presented my credentials which simply stated that I came from the British Embassy, Nanking, and which gave me authority to collect Professor Trend's properties and to check on his death.

"Trend?" The Chinese struggled unfamiliarly with the name, then his face brightened . . . "Suggest you try Guest House. All suitable foreign style gentlemen inhabit there. Is excellent hotel."

"He's dead," I explained.

The clerk frowned tightly, then, "Ah, so! English dead—the Honorable Mr. Missing Pyramid. Am sorry. Situation is personal care of illustrious chief, General Wu-tai. At moment General is out sweeping graves of Jo Emperors. Home soon."

I experienced an unpleasant sense of resentful helplessness, a reaction unavoidable when one deals with official China.

"You desire to view Mr. Honorable Missing Pyramid?" the Chinese asked.

I nodded quickly. So Trend had become an honorable pyramid? Although I had never met the professor, he fascinated me but perhaps too late. In Nanking they had told me that he had a flare for acquiring odd names. Down there the Chinese called him Mr. Ancestor Consultant.

We went through a deserted courtyard and into the thick-walled jail. An armed guard paced the entranceway. At the end of a corridor of empty cells we came to a door that was opened wide. I looked in. At the same instant an odor came out to turn my stomach. Within the cell I saw six large cakes of ice arranged in geometric pattern upon the stone floor. In the center, framed by the ice, lay a corpse. Two shivering coolies crouched on each side of the barrier energetically fanning the melting ice with bamboo Soochow fans. They were like men behind barricades waging a battle with the fumes of death. In their way they kept the corpse quite cool.

I went in and looked at the body. It was Trend. Even without his spectacles he matched his photographs. A medium man, blond, middle in age; he had kept well in life, but now he looked as if he were tired of the entire business and was going to pot hastily. Rigor had come and gone long ago. The Chinese had placed stone eye-weights on his lids. They had begun to drop back into the sockets giving him a stony stare. His small lady-like feet were shoeless.

"He is dead, naturally."

The voice behind me had spoken in a curiously accented English, an intonation more Latin than Chinese.

I spun around. The clerk was gone. In his place at the doorway was a huge foreigner whose dark, military-cropped hair further increased the idea of largeness. He wore a loose, blushing pink cotton suit of undetermined nationality and in the breast pocket was thrust a pair of jade chopsticks.

"Who are you?" I asked.

"I'm Quinto—Gimiendo Hernandez Quinto." The man smiled with eyes that were like black thumbprints.

I grew suddenly cautious. The face meant nothing to me, but the name did. Quinto was legend in China: a fabulous Mexican. During the war years he had been a guerilla leader and before that—well, no one knew much about his past. He had been visible in China longer than anyone could remember.

"I am General Wu's friend," he said. "I assist him here today while he is out sweeping ancestors. You don't mind, Captain Frazier?"

I assumed an air of indifference and shrugged to cover the shock that went through me. Captain Frazier! I was in mufti and my credentials had not indicated either my rank or that I was attached to Counter Intelligence.

"You've come for Mr. Pyramid?" Quinto asked.

"To identify the body."

"*Ayi*, it is not a pretty body now. Still, there are many alive who are not as handsome, eh?"

I tried to shrug aside my annoyance. "How was he killed?" I asked.

"Very simple. A garotte of straw around the neck."

I glanced at Trend's throat. The discoloration had spread evenly by now. My attention lingered upon his dead face. It didn't look like the face of a man made to be murdered in the hinterlands of China. In fact, it didn't belong here at all; it belonged in a lecture room. It was the sort you'd expect to find beaming pleasantly on some college green.

Perhaps he had been a teacher once. Maybe before the world got unhinged, I didn't know. All I had on Professor Trend was the briefing CI had given me in Nanking. Trend had come here on an archeological trip to investigate a lost Chinese pyramid which someone had discovered and air-photoed in the hills beyond Sianfu after the war. The pile was estimated to be over two thousand years old, twice as high as the pyramid of Cheops in Egypt and probably full of valuable ancestors.

Whatever else Trend did was complete hush. I knew there was something else for my orders were to collect his personal effects, particularly a brown expense book and a case of instruments. I had been instructed to keep his death as quiet as possible, to make no fuss, to appear to rely on the local police and keep my eyes open. The expense-book was the most important. It was code. The Chief had given me no more than this; mine was one of those blind assignments; you do one part of a job, someone else does another and neither of you know what the whole is.

I BACKED out of the icebox cell. There was nothing more the corpse could tell me. I glanced at Quinto speculatively. "Where was he killed?"

"In a Buddhist temple near the Tartar Gate. Glorious Light Temple."

"Any witnesses?"

"No witness."

"Anyone suspected?"

"The general has arrested two. You'll see them tomorrow."

"I'd like to see them now."

The huge Mexican stared at me ruefully, almost as if I had clumsily violated the three hundred rules of ceremony and the three thousand of behavior all at one time. "Tomorrow," he repeated patiently. "Both prisoners are permitted today to go into the country and visit ancestors."

I stared incredulously. "They were freed?"

"They'll be here tomorrow, but it does not help. These prisoners are merchants of the city. Through an unhappy circumstance their shops put on sale certain objects belonging to the dead one."

The irritation which had blazed up in me subsided. I began to worry about the expense-book and instruments. I spoke guardedly, asking, "What objects?"

We returned to the office and Quinto spoke to the clerk in a rapid-fire Shensi dialect which I couldn't follow, but to which a faint Mexican accent obdurately

adhered. The clerk opened a carved teak chest and handed me a wisp of straw rope, the murder weapon. Very ineffective, I thought. He gave me a wrist watch, a fountain pen with the name TREND stamped upon it in gold and an inexpensixe reflex camera. Its leather case bore Trend's initials. There was no brown notebook, no box of instruments.

"Where are the rest of his things?" I asked.

"Only these were pawned," Quinto said. "His other things are in his hotel room under guard. These objects were stolen from the body."

"Did the shopkeepers identify who pawned these?"

"No. Too many people selling things now."

"Any leads at all?"

Quinto appeared to consider this distantly. His mouth hung open in a half-smile. He was one of the most natural human beings I have even seen, natural in the sense of a jungle animal in repose. "It is a waste of time for the General to look for a murderer," he murmured. "This is not Shanghai. In Sianfu murder is a little thing." He made a broad gesture to encompass all the ancient city, adding, "Here so many have died regularly for so many centuries death is no longer important."

The bland irrelevance of the statement coming from a Westerner stunned me for an instant. I had a sensation of fighting clouds; round, insubstantial, ridiculous clouds swirling about me. And somehow, the statement didn't even fit General Wu. I knew that the general was one of those provincial rarities; an ex-warlord who placed China's welfare above politics and personal interests, a man with a reputation for being honest and modern. A decade ago he had risked his own future by siding with the Young Marshal of Manchuria during the "kidnapping" of Chiang Kai-shek here in Sianfu. They had convinced Chiang of the need to unify the nation against the Japanese invaders.

The clerk handed me a police report written in both National Chinese and English. I skimmed through it, my mind half on it and half on Quinto.

"Here it says Trend's passport, a notebook and money were found in his pockets . . ." I looked up. "Where are they?"

"General Wu has them," Quinto replied. "It gives him pleasure to carry a British passport for a few days. He has the ambition to have such a passport for himself someday."

I shuddered slightly, resisting the feeling that I was being enveloped by a situation possessing qualities both ludicrous and disastrous.

"The death is interesting, isn't it?" Quinto said, referring to the report as though making certain I had missed nothing. "The body, it was robbed oddly. It was without shoes when found and the pockets were not cleaned completely. Two hundred pounds in English banknotes and many Chinese banknotes were left. Yet, all the small coins, coppers, silver shillings and a small gold piece were taken."

I frowned thoughtfully and reread part of the report—a statement from Gregor, the White Russian translator at the hotel. He claimed that Trend had left the hotel carrying much small change the afternoon of his death. It struck me as odd, but I could attach no significance to it. Furthermore, the expense-book was what I wanted. It was more important, the Chief had said, than even establishing who had killed Trend.

"The pockets interest me," Quinto said. "Do you know what else was left in them? Little stones! Like a child, he carried stones in his pockets."

He took a few samples of rock from his pocket, considered them thoughtfully for a moment, then tossed them to me.

"They may have come from the pyramid," I said.

"The pyramid is mud."

I stared at him directly and, perhaps, did not hide my suspicion and resentfulness at his intrusion in the case. He returned my stare with an air of whimsey, yet his expression was never completely simple. Behind the whimsey, his eyes were full of energy. They were as intelligent as hell, and as merciless.

"I am one who thinks your Professor Trend was not looking for the Great Shensi Pyramid," he said.

My mind snapped shut on the words. Danger ahead! Careful! I replied calmly, "I believe he was looking for it."

Quinto shook his head. "An archeologist wouldn't search for this missing pyramid. Only to your English newspapers is it lost. Everyone in Sianfu has known about it for two thousand years. Here there has been much amusement when your *Inglés* said he was looking for this lost pyramid."

"It has only recently been discovered," I countered.

"*Ayi,* but because no one troubles to tell the world about it. Since the T'ang dynasty men in Sianfu have considered it more important to remind the world of Wang Ch'ih's jewel. You have heard of it, yes?"

"I hardly think so."

"*Qué barbaridad!*" He shot me a look of scorn. "It's a poem, very beautiful. Eleven hundred years ago Wang Ch'in invented this two-character poem. It's so perfect it shines like a diamond. Because of its smallness everyone has always been concerned that it should not be forgotten. So naturally the pyramid is ignored. A pyramid is too large to be easily lost; it's not as important, anyway, as a two-word poem . . ." He rounded his heavy lips and asked, "You are sure he was an archeologist?"

"Certainly."

He shrugged. "In Sianfu an archeologist would surely go to the Pei-lin Museum. The professor did not once visit it. And in Hangkow a few weeks ago, two professional assassins attempted to shoot him. Did you know this? In China it's not customary to shoot archeologists. They are greatly respected."

I froze up tightly. I thought of Trend lying there hedged by ice, without shoes, eye-weights sinking in. I began silently cursing my chief. He had mentioned trouble in Hangkow but had sketched in nothing. Why hadn't they put me wise to Trend?

IT WAS a short walk from the *Yamen* to the Guest House. I went there alone.

To anyone who has been to Sianfu the Guest House stands out as an incredible place. Built by the Manchurian, Chang Hsueh-liang, in a capricious moment (before that other moment when he kidnapped Chiang Kai-shek), this strangest of all hotels succeeds in blending with Sianfu as intimately as Churchill philosophies do in the Kremlin. Although severely neo-Teutonic in lines, the hotel never quite avoided a certain amount of Americana —the chrome barbershop, the New York bar and plumbing which in moments of high enthusiasm included torrents of scalding water in the flushbowls. All this in the city where Genghis Khan left his mark as though it were only yesterday.

Instead of going to the room I had reserved, I had the floor boy admit me to Trend's quarters. It cose me a pack of cigarettes to get through the police guard stationed at the door.

There wasn't much in the room. The police had been through it, but they had been neat. Everything was as orderly as a fussy professor would leave it. Trend had been the kind who travels lightly. There was a single canvas American valpac carefully crammed with field gear, clothes, sox and a pair of boots. The very small size of the shoes reminded me sharply of Trend's bare feet against a cake of ice. He had evidently been a man who liked custom-made footwear. I recognized the gold Unicorn label of Cromwell's of London stamped in the lining of the boots.

A leather case had been shoved beneath a chair. I set it upon a table and examined the contents—some photo supplies, a leather sack filled with assorted rock specimens and a portable Geiger counter for detecting radioactivity. The thing stunned me for a second.

All at once, I understood why Trend was dead. His archeology had been a front. He was a geologist. The whole picture jelled. Poor chap, snooping through the back corridors of Asia looking for deposits of the stuff atom dreams are made of. The Chinese government probably didn't know he was doing it, and we weren't telling. Though it was just a guess, I was quite sure the Russians, Americans and French were also anxious to know who had deposits of fissionable ore; those who knew, or those who had it, liked to keep it quiet.

The little pouch of rocks and the Geiger counter gave me the creeps. I had visions of the Hangkow assassins, of Trend's expense-book and what its code

must contain. I remembered Quinto's odd interest in Trend and I didn't like it. I took out my gun and made certain the Sianfu dust hadn't clogged it.

I carried the case with the rocks and the instruments downstairs and had Mr. Chou, the hotel manager, lock it in his American-made safe.

Chou was a willowy blue-gowned man with broad Tartar features and agate eyes. He was very helpful. He told me Trend had been at the hotel for four days. Quinto had appeared the day after Trend's arrival. It was rumored that the Mexican had come from Hang-yan, not too distant from Hangkow. Mr. Chou explained that Trend had passed a good deal of time with Gregor, the hotel's translator, guide and foreign minister. I called Gregor in.

The Russian was a tattered, ungainly somber man. He reminded me of the Tartar camels in Sianfu, except that he spoke French almost exclusively. To the White Russians, French is a badge which they hang onto with an obscure and secret purposefulness. I asked him about Trend.

"We were friends," he agreed, nodding his longish, hook-nosed face.

"That's nice," I said. "Now give me an idea of what he did in the city? Where he went? Who he spoke with? Who saw him? Where'd you go with him?"

"Professor Trend—*touriste formidable!*" Gregor said. "Everywhere, we go. The Tartar City. The drum tower, shrines, the Mosque. The Pei-lin? *Non.* . . . He is beautiful with the tips; the pockets always full of tips for everyone."

"Were you with him the afternoon he was killed?"

The Russian eyed me with deliberate caution. "*Mais non.* With Gregor no one has trouble . . . Do you wish to see the sights?"

I smiled faintly and shook my head. . . . According to Gregor's version, Trend had been a little less professional than I had shaped him in my mind. He had been a gay blade. But the Russian's recital of Trend's four days in Sianfu checked too closely with the police report. It was as if the police hadn't questioned him, but rather, they had permitted him to memorize their report and he was giving it back to me.

I SUDDENLY asked him, "When did Quinto last talk to you?"

He opened his ragged mouth but before a word could slip out he shut it tightly. Then, with a slight move of his shoulders, he said, "The same day of Monsieur Pyramid's death."

"Did Quinto know Trend?"

Gregor eyed me evasively. "He knows everyone."

"You saw him watching the professor, didn't you?"

"But no. He didn't need to watch him. They were friends. They had drinks together once."

"The last day?"

"No. The last day General Wu and Monsieur Quinto were here together for a time. Quinto wished me to write letters for him in French so I didn't go with the professor."

I wondered if Gregor had any idea of who Quinto was working for. I asked him. The Russian seemed startled that I didn't know. "He is of no party," he said. "Quinto is with the old Hundred Names." That meant nothing to me. Old Hundred Names was the term for farmers, peasants or just people.

I went to the Glorious Light Temple. The temple lay in the shadows of the massive wall girdling the city. It, too, had its own private mud and carved wood wall gorgeously shaped like an undulating dragon. The head formed the gate arch.

A crowd of beggers at the gate surrounded me as effectively as a summer swarm of gnats. Their bare feet raised clouds of dust that settled thickly on ragged clothes scarcely held together by wisps of straw and hemp. I gave the gatekeeper a handful of paper currency to dole out to them after he had summoned one of the temple monks.

The monk who met me was young. He was wrapped in a dull gray robe and his shaven head was as smooth and dusty as a melon that had lain too long in its field. He made a ceremonious *tso i* bow and shook his own hands within his long fluttering sleeves. When he had completed the courtesies he said something to the beggars who had gathered around resentfully.

"They have manners of country ones,"

he smiled at me apologetically. "They not like paper money. Is now custom for foreign-style *ta pitzu* present better money."

"Since when?" I asked.

"Since long-short time. Other *ta pitzu* of pyramid presents silver coin." He fished within his robe and brought forth a grimy hand. In it was a British shilling.

I tossed some small coins to the beggars. The monk bowed again, so deeply I could see the nine sacred scars which had been burned upon his skull with live incense. We walked into the temple's main court. It was a lovely place, especially now toward sunset. Curved roofs stood against a tormented sky and the tinkling of wind bells was in the air. From somewhere came the sound of chanting voices, medieval and distant.

I explained my mission and asked if I could speak with the monks who had first discovered Trend's body. The monk stared beyond me. For a moment I thought he hadn't heard me, or that I had said it badly. Finally he smiled, a faint parched breaking of lips. He said, "I looked upon honorable departed *ta pitzu*."

"Will you honor me with a description of him?"

The bow again. "So impossible," murmured the monk. His *kuo-yu* speech was fluttery and melodious—liquid over pebbles. "Spirit of dead one loiters on premises, might object to incorrect description. After cleansing ceremony can speak freely."

Exasperation stirred within me. It was like fighting clouds again. I tried to rescue something at least from the run-around of indifference. I offered him a few silver coins and asked, "The police showed me a watch and other properties which were taken from the dead one. Were they on the body when you found it?"

The monk glanced at the coins, balancing them upon his fingertips as though weighing their exchange value. "All things gone," he said. "Watch gone, shoes gone, all things gone when I find departed one. Police find something in pockets. Brown book. blue book, stones."

"Did you see strangers in the temple that day?" I asked. "Other foreign visitors?"

He made a gentle motion with his hands that implied nothing. "Are many visitors. Each day pilgrims, many beggars, people of importance, but no other *ta pitzu*."

The image of Quinto flooded in upon my mind. Somehow I felt he should have been here at the temple that day. The monks should have noticed him. His appearance in Sianfu on Trend's heels, his interest in the case and in my investigation unnerved me. He had been with Gregor. In fact, he had prevented Gregor from accompanying Trend to the temple that afternoon. My brain began to toss about the prospects of hired assassins.

AFTER leaving the temple I checked on a number of places Trend had visited. I even tried a third-class opium house to get some perspective on the professional gunmen available in the city. But no leads. To almost everyone Mr. Honorable Missing Pyramid had been a very popular and amusing chap. And in each place I visited I was made increasingly aware that the local police had been there ahead of me. Their thoroughness in Trend's case seemed strangely exhaustive and un-Chinese.

At eight o'clock I called the police and insisted on seeing the general immediately. He promised to appear at the hotel in a half hour. By midnight he hadn't come and I was in a black mood.

The more I thought about Trend and the missing expense-book, the more alarmed I grew. I succumbed to one of my periodic fits of antipathy toward China, cursing the Sages for having so thoroughly sold some four hundred million people a philosophy of compromise and delicate adjustment which robbed all things of their black and whiteness.

I sat in the Guest House bar diluting my mood in a concoction celebrated on the bill-of-fare as White Horses Whiski. I was on my second when I saw Quinto's giant pinkish figure in the doorway. Behind him, like a shadow writ in less lavish characters, stood a Chinese in military uniform.

"*Ni hao*," Quinto greeted me as he came to the table. He pointed to his

companion. "Here is General Wu-tai. He's had a very enjoyable day at the graves."

The general was of the old school of high-domed, Luger-packing, Sam Browne belted warlords. This one had unaccountably gone patriotic and seemed at a loss for it. His legs and hips, what I could see of them, were neat and tapered, like an Oriental dancer's. His shoulders and head were out of proportion; the large bullet-shaped head closely shaven, giving him a monastic appearance. His mouth, however, was soft and girlish.

I gave him my calling card. He presented me with one of his own and carefully tucked mine in his pocket. Quinto was less formal. The way he drank was his calling card. As a preliminary, he ordered eight clay cups of Dragon's Eye, a concoction exactly the same in taste, color and ancestry as my White Horses. The general abstained. He took his pleasure in eying the various out-of-town officers and their modernized concubines who crowded the bar.

"Have you found everything you wish, Mr. Frazier?" the general inquired.

"Almost. I want the professor's passport and papers. Do you have them?"

The general chuckled complacently. "Excellent passport," he said in Chinese. "Very stiff cover; excellent." He pulled a sheaf of papers from his pocket and shuffled through them carelessly, revealing a red-jacketed American passport, a few nondescript French passports and a torn Nansen International passport. He handed me Trend's blue-covered passport and belongings.

"Thanks. . ." I verified the passport and put the money with it in my pocket without counting it. On opening Trend's expense-book, I tried not to show too much of my feeling of relief and interest. None of the pages had been torn out. That was a relief. Its coded contents were in no way obvious as such; I hoped it had also meant nothing to the general. On the surface, the notebook kept the professor true to form. It could have been a chronology of a day's shopping in Picadilly for it presented nothing more than meticulously itemized accounts of his spendings since Hangkow—hotel prices, meals, transportation. He had even recorded his smallest tips. If I hadn't known better I should have judged that he had been an accountant, not a geologist masquerading as an antiquarian.

"Police of opinion Mr. Pyramid was killed for his money," the general commented. "This is fortunate event."

"Fortunate!" I looked up in surprise.

"Yes, is fortunate we avoid international embarrassment. At first we suspect murder because of being English. Investigate assassinations. Such jobs are very expensive, maybe four hundred dollars, American. But all professional assassins in Sianfu suggest no such jobs offered recently. . ." He sighed with immense simplicity and a touch of celestial *shunp'o*, adding, "Is period of vast technological unemployment in Sianfu." He was about to say something more when his attention strayed toward a Soochow girl at the next table and failed to come back.

"The dead one wasn't an archeologist," Quinto said, and the tone of his voice alerted me instantly. "The *Inglés* was a spy, yes?"

I felt my skin crawl around me.

"Señor Pyramid had permission to search this region only for pyramids," Quinto went on calmly. "The general thinks that perhaps he was also looking for iron or gold or military information instead of pyramids. General Wu is very much against foreigners using the wealth of China. It's indeed lucky the professor was killed before General Wu learned this, otherwise his police would have had to shoot him officially and this would take much explaining—the shooting of an *Inglés*."

For a moment the Mexican's gaze settled sternly upon his array of whiskies in the manner of a drill officer facing a file of raw recruits, and then he looked at me, saying, "For this reason you won't find a murderer to report even if you need one. Your mind is shut. You suspect that the professor was killed because he was a spy, eh? Maybe you think a Russian, a Frenchman, a Kuomintang man or I did it? Today you went to the temple and to an opium house; you asked many questions; you searched for someone who would want to kill a spy. . . You forget to look for someone who might only wish to kill a man."

I SAT up abruptly, glancing from Quinto to the general. "Then you know who killed him?" I asked.

General Wu turned his shaven head and eyed me solemnly for a moment. "A beggar did it," he said.

"A beggar! Do you have him in hand then?"

"An arrest is of no importance," Quinto cut in.

"What proof do you have?"

"Proof?" The Mexican moved his blunt hands indifferently. "Proof is not important, either. In China the truth can never be proven, it is only suggested. The general suggests robbery."

"With a couple of hundred good British pounds left on the body!" I laughed ironically.

"*Ayi*, everyone robs according to his tastes. This murder wasn't done by a foreigner. Such a man doesn't trust a beggar's straw rope, nor does he kill in a place where he must pass through a gate which is watched."

"A Chinese could."

"Clearly, but a special kind of Chinese. You suspect an assassin. That's wrong. Our Sianfu gunman is very modern. He's a technician. He can read and write and he uses the pistol and knife because he is trained to them. He plans very carefully. When he's hired to kill, he times his job, escaping quickly. If he's hired to rob, he's like the Yellow River. Everything is cleaned out. When such a man steals for himself, he doesn't leave two hundred English pounds behind. He reads. He knows the value of foreign money. And he would not be fool enough to pawn things like a watch, a pen and a camera so soon in this city. . . You see, it's very simple. A few coins were taken, a gold piece and some pawning objects. Only a beggar would be so selective."

"And leave the pounds? That's no robbery."

"For a beggar it's robbery," Qunito nodded. "The crime of a poor man. The dead one invited such a man to murder him. A few hard coins. . . To a poor man this is wealth."

He paused and tapped General Wu's arm. The latter withdrew his attention from the Soochow girl and grinned sheepishly at me.

"Professor Trend goes to the temple," Quinto continued in English. "He scatters coins among the beggars as you did today. One beggar notices the gold coin in his hand. He follows your *Inglés* into a deserted courtyard and with his grass belt. . ." He made a gesture of a loop drawn harshly about his neck. "It's that simple. And this uneducated beggar who cannot even make a *k'ai-shu* character with the brush, who has seen few foreigners in his life time, how can he know that British notes are worth what they say? To him all paper money is like Chinese money, worthless. But he understands the value of metal coins very well."

I stared at Quinto with averted deliberation. The man had a shrewd mind, so shrewd I didn't fully trust it. There was a curious air of patness about his entire explanation. Next, he would be claiming that the beggar had taken the camera and other things. . . Why had he pawned them? Simple. Without the ability to write, a beggar had no use for a pen; the camera, it was a mystery to him. And the watch? Time meant nothing to a beggar. . . Undoubtedly he would have the beggar keep Trend's missing boots because winters were cold in Sianfu.

Somehow, Quinto sensed my reactions. He shrugged, saying, "You understand, this is a truth one does not prove. One suggests it."

I turned to the general. "Have your men begun rounding up the beggars in the city?"

Wu gave me his girlish smile. "There are so many beggars, there is no point," he said.

His expression grew remote, a blandness inherited from countless centuries back.

I stared at both of them. I was caught in a maddening subtle conspiracy of indifference. I remembered my orders to go along with the local police. With General Wu backing up Quinto's tidy explanation there was no alternative but to accept it. Yet in agreeing with it, I found myself assuming their bleak indifference toward Trend's death. I shook out a cigarette and offered them the pack. I wanted a moment to think.

*(Continued on page 145)*

# JACKASS

BY

HAL. G. EVARTS

*Sam held up the two sticks of dynamite. "Clear the hell off my land," he roared, "or I'll blast the pack of you to Kingdom Come!"*

SAM DURFEE sat motionless on the front porch of his shack, squinting into the desert noonday glare. His chair was tilted back against the wall and his heels were hooked over the lower rung. Now and then he wiped a blue bandana around the sweatband inside his hat. He had been sitting there since an hour before dawn, waiting and watching. If need be, he would sit the rest of the day, a week, a month. The time didn't matter. At seventy-eight he had plenty of time.

On the plank floor behind him, concealed in the deeper shadow of the doorway, stood an old-fashioned wooden exploder box. Twin wires led away from it, across the porch to the sand, and disappeared like slim black snakes. Without shifting from his seat Sam Durfee

could reach out and press down the upright hand plunger.

He was a tall spare man with sunbeaten face and a white beard which he wore halfway down his chest because shaving water was scarce. He had lived alone in the same shack on the same quarter section for over thirty years, working his mine on the hillside occasionally and driving into town when he felt like it, which was seldom more than once a month. He had never considered himself mean or ornery, or even unsociable; he liked chance visitors well enough. But now an obstinate brooding anger filled him.

"Right soon," he said, "some knothead 'll ride up in his car and ask questions. You'll see."

He often spoke his thoughts aloud, and he did so without self-consciousness. The burro, a scrawny flea-bitten stray, lacking name or other distinction, pricked up one ear and scratched his hide against the corner post. Sam regarded him gravely. Within a minute the burro brayed. Sam shaded his eyes and scowled at the wheel tracks that twisted off through the creosote toward a gash in the ridge which lay between the boundary of his claim and the county highway half a mile beyond.

A low gear whine drifted to him on the heat currents and presently a coupe crawled out of the canyon mouth. Fifty yards from the shack it stopped. Emmett Hoskins, a fat middle-aged man in overalls, got down. "I wanta talk with you, Sam," he called.

Sam lowered the front legs of his chair to the floor. "I'm kinda busy, Emmett."

Emmett peered uncertainly at the figure on the porch. "I reckon you know I'm deputy of this county?"

Sam snorted. "What's that around your belly, Emmett? Your old Daddy's .45 belt?"

"I'm carryin' out my duty. I gotta complaint. Them L.A. folks that was here yesterday."

"Didn't they find no thousand dollar bills?"

"Now, Sam." The fat man took a few more steps and stopped. "That was only a joke, kind of a gag. You can't go 'round scarin' people to death."

"I wasn't jokin'. I meant it. I'm dead serious."

Emmett fidgeted with his gun belt. "They can have you jailed. Threat with a deadly weapon, intent to do bodily mischief—"

"Mischief be damned! The next idjut you send out here I'll really blow sky high!"

"Be reasonable, Sam. They bring money into the town. They're bringin' us prestige. They don't bother you any."

"You better vamoose, Emmett. 'Fore I lose my temper."

"You stubborn old jackass!"

"Jackass?" Sam's palm slapped against his thigh. "If you got the brains of one, which you ain't, you'll climb into your car and high-tail outa here."

He stood up. Emmett hesitated, then turned and hurried back to his coupe. "You can't do this," he shouted. "It's illegal."

Quickly he drove away.

Sam sighed and leaned back in his chair once more. He filled his pipe and lighted it. His glance traveled deliberately around the bowl of the little rim-rocked valley. He had prospected here first in 1918, the spring after his wife died, hunting isolation as much as high grade ore. Later he had filled a road of sorts through the canyon and built himself the shack of railroad ties. Other improvements like the cactus garden and colored rock retaining walls he'd added gradually. With one exception he'd enjoyed comparative peace and quiet most of that time.

Thinking back over the past two weeks, Sam wondered at the purpose that held him here hour after hour. The intensity of it surprised and puzzled him a little, because he had imagined he was long past such feeling; he was too old to get lathered over trifles. And yet, as he recalled the swarms of tourists in their cars, he sensed it might be somehow important. They threatened more than his solitude. They and Emmett Hoskins and the newspaper reporters, all of them, had some creeping disease of the mind beyond his experience. They were pestilence itself.

He looked at the burro, who was still scratching his rump against the post. "Jackass!" Sam said, and spat.

THE morning he ran out of powder, Sam decided it was about time to pick up supplies in Black Mountain anyway. He'd been blasting out a side pocket, so he put away his drill and pick and started down the trail to his shack. A few feet above the water tank he found the twenty dollar bill.

He almost mistook it for green rock scale. A puff of wind whirled it against a salt bush and there it hung, flapping and fluttering practically in his face. Otherwise he would have passed without a second glance. He smoothed out the bill and stared at the weathered countenance of Andy Jackson. The paper was faded and torn and the serial number was illegible from exposure. Sam folded it carefully and tucked it in his shirt.

He had no notion where it came from, nor any particular curiosity. As a miner he recognized and accepted good luck when it blew his way. Never in his life had he found that amount of actual money and he did not search around the hill for more now. He walked on to his shack and got ready for the twelve-mile drive to town.

These trips Sam looked upon with certain misgivings. His car, a 1925 air-cooled Franklin, the only car he had ever owned, was subject to punctures, battery trouble and unexpected breakdowns. For this, and other reasons, he did not altogether trust the gasoline engine as a means of transportation. At the moment, finding twenty dollars cash seemed providential because he needed a new tire.

He stopped at the mine company magazine outside town and bought a box of dynamite, some fuse and percussion caps. Then he drove up the deserted street and parked by the gas pump in front of Hoskins Mercantile one-story frame building. Emmett was filling the tank of a large sedan. "Emmett," he said, "I'd like for you to order me a new tire."

A young man in dark glasses and an orange sport shirt sauntered down the store steps and leaned one elbow on Sam's radiator.

"Quite a crate you're driving, Pop," he said.

Sam stared at him and turned back to Emmett. "Tell 'em to deliver it by next week."

"Dunno. They don't stock them odd sizes regular." Emmett winked at the young man. "What's the big rush, Sam? You goin' over Nevada way to prove up a new claim?"

"Never mind," Sam said. "You order me that tire."

The young man grinned. "You're kidding, Pop. That jalop 'll never make the state line."

Sam gave him another look. He was, Sam judged, one of those tourists who, since the war, had begun to discover places like Black Mountain because the road was paved now and they could do seventy miles an hour. He fished the twenty from his pocket and handed it to Emmett. "That oughta cover last month's grub too."

Emmett unfolded the bill and pressed out the creases and held it up to the sun. He frowned and clicked his teeth. "What's wrong with it?" Sam demanded.

"Almost wore out. Likely fall apart on me."

"Maybe they ain't so fussy across the street," Sam said.

"Take it easy," Emmett said in a mollifying tone. "I'm only sayin' it's had a hard life."

The young man peered over his shoulder. "Must be Confederate."

Emmett chuckled and the two of them exchanged knowing looks. "Where'd you get it, Sam? Under your mattress?"

Unsmiling, Sam said. "Picked it off a bush. I growed a good crop this year."

"Come on, Pop," the young man said. "You're holding out on us. You print these yourself?"

"Well, I'll tell you, bub." Sam lowered his voice confidentially. "I mine 'em. I got a ten dollar mine, and this here twenty, and any day now I figure to bust open a fifty."

"What about ones and fives, Pop?"

"Fives? Hell, I give them to the pack rats. Only keep it under your hat, will you? I don't want no stampede." Sam squeezed behind the wheel of his car and slammed the door. "You get that tire by Friday, Emmett."

The two men watched him coast down the street and disappear. The young man shook his head. "A character," he

said. "Strictly a character. Where do you suppose he got that sawbuck?"

"Beats me." Emmett pinched his lip. "The old coot never had that much cash in his jeans long's I known him. I sure do wonder—"

THE following Friday Sam had carburetor trouble. He rolled the Franklin out of the shed and was tinkering under the hood with a wrench, fuming and cussing, when a roadster pulled up in front of his shack. Two strangers climbed out. They both looked hot and peevish. The short man, smoking a cigar, carried a square black box slung over one shoulder.

Sam wiped his hands on a rag and walked over to meet them. The short man jerked a thumb at the burro, who lay dozing in a strip of shade beside the porch. "That your donkey?"

"Burro," Sam said. "You boys lookin' for one?"

"I'll bite. What are we looking for, Joe?"

The second man, the one called Joe, glanced inside the shack and his bloodshot eyes came to rest on Sam. "Your name Murphy?"

"Nope," Sam said.

"I told you this was a phony." The short man threw away his cigar and mopped his face with his sleeve. "Chasing us two hundred miles out here in this lousy heat—"

"What you griping about?" Joe said. "You get overtime." He flipped open a notebook and turned to Sam. "What's your name, Dad?"

"Durfee," Sam said. " 'F-double-E'. If you're from the survey office you're wastin' your time. My claim 's filed airtight."

"You want to make a survey, Joe?" the short man said.

"Go on, grab your shots," Joe said. "Let's get outta here before my head splits."

The short man opened his camera, adjusted a flash bulb attachment and backed off the porch. He sighted through his finder. Sam flinched at the sudden dazzling flare. The burro snorted and scrambled to his feet. "What's he takin' pictures for?" Sam demanded.

"He collects pinups," Joe said. He unclipped a pencil from his shirt. "Now, gimme the dope."

Sam scratched his head. "Young feller, you and your friend 're welcome to mosey around here long as you like. Glad to have you. But I don't know what in Tuppet you're talkin' about."

"Listen," Joe said with weary patience, "All I want is a couple quotes. You're the guy who found that money, aren't you?"

"Money?" Sam blinked. "I found some. Why?"

"O.K. then," Joe said. "How are you going to spend it?"

"I already spent it."

"All of it? In a week?"

Sam's eyes narrowed. "You tryin' to sell me another tire? That chuckle-head Emmett send you?"

"Oh my lord," Joe said. "Who's Emmett?"

"The biggest windbag in San Berdoo County."

Joe pressed one hand to his forehead. "Let's skip it, Dad. I suppose you'll retire now."

"I been retired the last thirty years," Sam said.

The photographer had been prowling around inside the shack. Now he returned to the porch and took Sam by the arm. "Over this way. Some closeups." He led Sam out into the sunlight and studied his profile. "Put your arm around the donkey's neck. Real cute and folksy."

"He's no donkey," Sam said. "He's a wild burro that hangs around here sometimes."

"Yeah? Well fluff out your chin whiskers so they show up good."

"How about him and the donkey looking at a dollar bill together," Joe said. "Like they struck it rich."

"Hold it." The photographer raised his arm. "Steady. Make with the million dollar smile."

Stiffly Sam stood through several pictures. The whole rigamarole struck him as pretty silly, but he had posed for other tourists a time or two. He didn't mind that as much as answering some of their fool questions. When he had finished the one called Joe spoke up again.

"Say, Dad, one more question, off the

record—" He coughed and fingered the seams of his pants, as though he were somehow embarrassed. "—between you and me and the Bureau of Internal Revenue—how much *did* you find?"

Sam looked at him steadily. For an instant a bright, almost feverish spark animated the jaded expression in Joe's eyes. It was a look Sam had seen before. He said, "You wouldn't believe me if I told you."

"Lemme ask one." The photographer waved his arm around at the brown blistering valley. "How can you live in this godforsaken Turkish bath and not go nuts?"

Sam rubbed his chin. He had hiked sixty miles across the desert on one canteen the first time he came. For years after that he had packed his water and supplies by burro. He'd never thought much about it, but he supposed he'd walked a good ten thousand miles or so around the Mojave in his prime, before the highways and filling stations. "Can't," he said. "I'm crazy as a loon."

They both laughed, a little too loudly, and climbed back into the roadster. "So long, Dad," Joe said. "Don't take any lead nickels."

After they had gone Sam tramped back to the porch and sat down. He sat for some while, gazing off at the mountains, before he happened to notice a Los Angeles newspaper one of the men had dropped or thrown away. He picked it up and spread it across his knees. Someone had blue-pencilled a ring around a two-paragraph story on the bottom of the front page. Sam read slowly:

"Barstow, Aug. 15 (Special)—A lucky desert miner hit the jackpot today, but in greenbacks—not nuggets. S. Murphy, Black Mountain prospector, found on his claim what is thought to be part of a $70,000 fortune in currency missing since March 1, 1942. On that date a violent sandstorm swept over nearby Camp Carr, U.S. Army airbase, and reportedly scattered a monthly pay roll which was laid out in stacks in the Finance Office for distribution. A widespread search by Camp personnel and eager civilians failed to turn up a single bill at the time, but hope was never abandoned.

"Murphy declined to reveal the extent of his discovery. Local Army authorities had no comment."

SAM reread the story two or three times. He felt suddenly tired. Not a healthy natural tired, but the kind that left a sick sour taste in his mouth. He crumpled up the newspaper. "Lord A'mighty!" he said, and hurled it to the floor.


## MEMO TO AMERICA

DON'T miss the Chicago Railroad Fair, fitting climax to more than 100 years of progressive railroading; or the special Fair issue of Railroad Magazine, designed to highlight your Centennial memories with featured reproductions of the best moments from "Wheels A-Rolling." And if you want a thorough understanding of the lighter side of rail history, try a Summer Special on the New Orleans & Fiddler's Green, or find out what it's like to race to glory with the ANTELOPE, old 999 and the B&O's famous 2024. Remember to read the September issue, now on your newsstand. Or send 35c to

RAILROAD MAGAZINE

205 E. 42nd St., New York City 17

On the back of an old calendar he scribbled, "Gone to Nevada," and tacked it to the door. He snapped a padlock through the hasp, filled a drum with water for the burro. He drove out to highway and took down the hand-lettered sign that marked the turn-off to his place. By the time he reached town he was breathing hard and he was mad clear through.

Emmett straightened from behind a counter as he entered the store. "Howdy," Emmett said. "Your tire come in by the last stage."

"Hang the tire," Sam said. "What you been blabbin' about me?"

"Why nothin', Sam. Nothin' a'tall."

"You're a flannel-mouth liar, Emmett. Where's that twenty I gave you last week?"

"Doggone it all, Sam. You ain't askin' me to let you have that on credit?"

Sam pounded his fist on the counter. "Seventy thousand dollars' credit!"

"Oh, that." Emmett looked relieved. "Well, now, I'll tell you. Thing like that's bound to get spread around some. You know how people talk."

"I'm learnin'," Sam said. "Sandstorm!" He had nearly died in one in the spring of 1906. A sudden wind had trapped him in the Saline Valley, twisting down over the flats in a great yellow funnel. He had tied a rag over his mouth and crawled on his hands and knees through the stinging suffocating clouds. Two days later he stumbled into an Indian camp, delirious and half blind. The bones of his burros had never been found. *That* was a sandstorm.

"So you, or some damn' fool in Barstow, figure that money blew clean across the county and landed in my back yard, five years later? Rainin' tens and twenties outta the sky in buckets?"

"Now, Sam, you got it all wrong." Emmett gave him a tolerant smile. "Them writer fellers have to think up stories. That's their job."

"Why don't they write it the way it happened?"

"No human int'rest. No publicity value." Emmett decided not to mention the long distance query he had received from Barstow two days before. It wasn't his fault the newspaper had exaggerated; not entirely. "Smart business."

"Smart? That ain't exactly what I call it."

Sam jammed his hat down over his ears. "If any more of 'em come snoopin', tell 'em I'm gone. Tell 'em I blew it on a vacation."

Seven days later he chugged back through the canyon, reassured by familiar landmarks and impatient now to get home. He had been to Nevada and back, and he felt fine, but one week was enough. Shadows slanted across the hills and a faint breeze tempered the evening heat. As he neared the final bend Sam realized how much he had missed his valley.

A sudden horn blast crowded him off the road, and an outbound sedan lurched by in a veil of dust. Sam stalled his motor, and it would not start again. He left the Franklin and walked the rest of the way, shaken and somewhat bewildered.

Half a dozen cars were parked along the deep-worn ruts, and people were climbing everywhere over the rocks and hillsides. He watched them for several minutes before approaching the shack. One window was broken and the door had been jimmied open. He kicked some empty milk cartons and a watermelon rind off the porch and peered inside. Someone had overturned his bunk and dumped the bureau drawers, and a lipstick mustache adorned the picture of his wife above the fireplace. He stared around the room vacantly, and then he found his chair and carried it outside and sat down.

One by one the cars began to leave, purring off toward the highway. Later a little girl with braces on her teeth came up and pointed at Sam. "Oooh, Mommy! See the desert rat."

Sam raised his eyes. A fat woman in slacks and a large sunburned man, who was drinking beer from a can, strolled over. "Looks like everything's been picked over," the man said. "We're too late."

Sam grunted.

"Live around here, pardner?"

"Used to," Sam said.

The man swigged from the can and wiped his mouth. "Imagine an old geezer finding all that dough. Some people sure have the luck."

"My Daddy doesn't wear a beard," the girl said. "He shaves with a razor."

The woman tittered. "Seventy thousand clams," the man said with reverence.

He drained the can and tossed it away. Then he reached in his hip pocket and pulled out a small target pistol. He took a sight on the can and fired twice. Above the reports Sam heard a frenzied snort. The burro ran out of a greasewood clump and came to a stiff-legged halt. His hindquarters were trembling and his eyes had a wild spooky look.

Sam made a soft clucking noise with his tongue. The burro tossed his head and trotted toward him. Just then the man fired again. There was a *ping* of metal and the burro bolted off for the ridge. His feet clattered across the rocks and a minute later Sam saw his silhouette along the skyline.

The man whistled. "Looka that jackass go! Brother!"

Very deliberately Sam got up from his chair and went around to the tunnel behind the shack where he kept his powder. Someone had broken open the box but the contents were intact. He took two sticks of dynamite, cut short lengths of fuse, capped and crimped them. He filled his pipe and lighted it carefully. When he returned the man was opening another can of beer.

"Mister," Sam said, "you ever see a jackass before?"

"Who, me?"

"That's a burro, and don't you forget it. Now clear the hell off my land."

The man stiffened. "Hold on pardner. Watch your language."

"Yeah," the woman said. "There's a lady present."

"She's leavin' right now." Sam held up both sticks and shook them. "Make tracks! Alla you!"

The little girl burst into a wail. "You can't talk to my Daddy like that."

"Quit your blubberin!"

The woman gasped. "Well, I never. Arthur. The nerva him!"

"Lady," Sam said, "this here ain't a candle; it's a booster charge. It'll lift a tona rock high as that hill. You'd go higher."

"You old bat," the man said. "What's eating you?"

"Arthur." Sam took one step forward and lifted the pipe from his mouth. The two fuse tips dangled inches from its bowl. "Arthur, ease that pop gun back into your pants. Then head for your car. Don't walk neither. Kinda run."

The man swallowed. He looked at Sam and he looked at the ground.

"So help me," Sam roared. "I'll blast the pack of you to Kingdom Come!"

The man backed away. The woman let out a shriek. The little girl, with the perception of youth, stuck out her tongue at Sam, turned and ran with all her might. Her parents followed.

Sam watched their tail light vanish in the dusk. A deep unbroken quiet spread over the valley. He tapped the dottle from his pipe and walked back to the shed. With a grim and intense satisfaction he began to sort out what tools he would need.

SITTING on his porch now in early afternoon, Sam passed the time smoking and admiring the view. He had always taken the bleak barren mountains around him more or less for granted, but today they seemed to have a character and beauty of their own. It was, he thought, in a moment of sentiment rare for him, the sort of place his wife would have appreciated. From time to time he moistened his throat from a water bag or watched the burro, who had an unlimited capacity for itching. The sun beat down. Sam folded his arms and waited some more.

Presently a low-slung expensive looking convertible, followed by a small panel truck, cruised into the valley. The burro looked up and his ears flattened. Sam drew a deep breath. The two cars came on slowly through the shimmer of heat waves.

Emmett Hoskins, minus his gun belt but wearing a nervous grin, approached the shack on foot. "It's me again, Sam," he said. "No hard feelin's."

Sam said, "I ain't changed my mind, if that's what you mean."

Emmett balanced one foot tentatively on the edge of the porch. "Looky here, Sam. These people drove all the way from Hollywood special to meet you. Important people. You treat 'em right."

Sam fixed his gaze on the truck. Two men had lifted down and were hurriedly adjusting on a tripod what he identified as a motion picture camera. "Emmett," he said, "if they come from the moon it wouldn't make no difference."

A young girl in tight-fitting white shorts and a tighter halter dismounted from the convertible and advanced with a smile of studied charm. Behind her trailed a sleek young man in red sandals. They brushed past Emmett and stepped confidently onto the porch. Sam looked at the girl's midriff and opened his mouth and closed it again.

"Mr. Murphy," the young man said, "I'm Sid Hinz, a representative of Liberty Studios, the producers of fine motion pictures, Incorporated. Allow me to present—" He paused a full three seconds—"Miss . . . Lois . . . LaRue! Our sensational new starlet!"'

Sam removed his hands from his pockets. Miss LaRue dimpled prettily and flashed white teeth, accustomed to silent awestruck homage. In addition to everything else she had poise. "On behalf of Liberty Studios," she recited in a throaty singsong, "I hereby name you Honorary President of the Southern California Chapter of the Lois LaRue Fan Club."

There was a long silence. Sam felt the blood creeping up the back of his neck. "Say somethin', Sam!" Emmett hissed.

"Miss LaRue is our nominee for '48," Mr. Hinz explained. "La Rue, the Woo Girl of the Year."

Sam peered up at Miss LaRue from his chair. Her smile seemed a permanent fixture upon her face. "You want me to pose for a picture with you?" he said, blankly.

With a hint of coyness she said, "That's not all."

"And maybe they'll run that picture in movie shows all over the country? Because I found seventy thousand dollars? Is that it?"

A look of surprise crossed her features. "Why yes. I autograph a ten dollar bill for you—that makes you one of my fans, you know—and then—I kiss you."

"You come all the way from Hollywood to kiss me?" Sam said slowly, unbelievingly.

At that moment, the burro, who had been edging closer, attracted by the perfume, chose to sniff at one of Miss LaRue's bare thighs. His moist warm nose brushed her skin and she jumped. "Get that awful old stinking mule away from me!"

The burro backed off. Sam cleared his throat and he knew then what had been troubling him right along. "Miss LaRue," he said, "I ain't got anything against you personal. You look good in short pants, which is more 'n I'll say for some. But I've had a bellyful of people allus tryin' to get something for nothing."

Miss LaRue's full red lips parted. "I don't think you realize just who I—"

"I don't care if you're Mother Macree in a red kimono. You ain't agoin' to kiss me, in front of that camera, or behind it, or anyplace else, and that's a fact."

Miss La Rue's smile cracked. "Why you filthy old man!"

"Sam." Emmett, under the eyes of the famous, gave his trousers a hitch. "I'm warnin' you for the last time."

"You sure are, Emmett. That's the truest thing you said all day. Like a lotta other people, you seem to lost the habit lately." Without leaving his chair Sam reached behind him into the doorway and lifted the exploder box and braced it between his knees. "Wired and ready to blow. I'm givin' you one minute to clear the valley. Jest one."

The color drained from Emmett's face. "Sam, for the lova Pete!"

"What is this," Miss LaRue demanded. "I'm no bit player, Sid. I got a contract. I don't have to take his guff."

Mr. Hinz said exactly nothing. Emmett moistened his lips. Somewhere a board creaked. Sam curled his fingers over the plunger and jiggled it delicately. "You want a show," he said, "and by God you'll get one. Sixty seconds from now!" In a steady controlled voice be began to count. "One—two—"

"You don't understand," Mr. Hinz squeaked. "You—"

"Git! Five—six—"

Miss LaRue's chin suddenly sagged. Her celebrated bosom rose. She screamed, a shrill ear-splitting scream that echoed from the hills. With a speed astounding for high heels she dashed to the con-

vertible. Her retreat had neither charm nor grace. She jammed on the starter, raced the motor, backed around and shot down the road, very nearly leaving Emmett and the representative of Liberty Studios behind, but not quite. The cameramen were already gone.

"Thirty-three," Sam said, and the rear bumper winked from sight. On the count of fifty-nine he pressed down the plunger. One second later the canyon mouth and a section of ridge seemed to dissolve in a yellow-gray cloud of huge dimensions. A deep rumbling concussion shook the earth and rocked the air with solid sheets of sound. Gravel and debris pattered down around the shack. Gradually a dead hush crept in slowly over the valley.

Sam picked himself up off the floor, dusted his hands, righted his chair and sat down. Through a pall of settling dust he squinted toward what had been his outlet to the highway, buried now along with his car under several thousand tons of dirt and rock. He stared around at the splendid isolation of his mountains and he laughed.

"Let 'em come," he said. "Let 'em. The tourists and reporters and movie stars and plain damn' fools, lookin' for money or publicity or whatever. Let 'em walk their behinds for once, and let 'em sweat. I'm ready now."

He looked at the burro. The burro threw up his head and brayed with a note of satisfaction.

"Welcome home," Sam said.

# "RILEY GRANNAN'S LAST ADVENTURE"

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# THE DEVIL'S LEFT TUSK

ILLUSTRATED BY ROGER L. THOMAS

*Saldanha's bullet sprayed my face—but didn't hit.*

*THE STORY THUS FAR:*

I, MALCOLM MURPHY, had come to Addis Ababa to meet my brother MATT, the famous radio reporter—only to learn that he had died several days before, supposedly of a heart attack. Two callers at my hotel thought otherwise: PHILEAS LUBIN, a broken-down French doctor, who told me flatly my brother had been murdered; and GUBRU DAVID, an Ethiopian, who made an appointment to talk with me later. In the hotel bar, presided over by the Greek manager, CYRIL DOURAS, I ran into MARI TORNQUIST, a Swedish girl who warned me to leave Ethiopia as soon as possible. I left her to meet Gubru David but was waylaid by a group of Ethiopians who beat me up, stole my money and passport and repeated Mari's warning to quit the Land of the Conquering Lion of Judah.

At the American Consulate, I talked with VAN BUREN, the huge Negro guard, who took me in to see SIMMONS, the consul. Simmons belittled the murder rumors, suggested I forget the whole business and I left in anger. Van Buren then took me to DESTA MASAL, a special representative of Emperor HAILE SELASSIE. Masal was very helpful. He got me a new passport, loaned me money and gave me a list of suspects in my brother's death. These were four men who had applied for a permit to take a caravan out on the road to Debra Markos, where Matt had gone, in the direction of *Gera-Kond-*

By ROBINSON MacLEAN

*Zaytan*—"The Left Tusk of the Devil." Masal thought that Matt might have discovered something of great value out there and had been killed to prevent his broadcasting his discovery. The four men were: DR. VALTER GRANERUS of Helsinki, JOAM SALDANHA of Lisbon, and ROMEO FALCONI and ARTHUR FINCH-WEST of Addis Ababa.

Van Buren insisted on accompanying me to Debra Markos. A few miles out of Addis we were halted by two white men and a white woman. When Van Buren objected to the hold-up, one of the men almost cut him in two with an automatic rifle. I went for the killer and something struck me from behind . . .

I woke to find myself a prisoner in a filthy native *tukul* with an old woman for my jailer. I managed to free myself and overcome my captor. In a nearby hut I found PENNY BLAIR, the woman who had been with Van Buren's killer. I forced her to accompany me when I set out again, but she escaped from our wilderness camp that night. Soon after, Phileas Lubin appeared out of nowhere. He had been trailing me, hoping in one way or another to cut himself in on any profitable deal that might turn up. He offered to help me find the caravan, but suggested I disguise myself as a *batawi*, a kind of Ethiopian holy man. I agreed and under his skillful hands the metamorphosis was made. With darkened skin and clothed in the robes of a hermit, I mounted one of the chunky mules Lubin had brought with him and we started out. Before long, we looked back to see a group of armed horsemen closing in on us. The situation looked hopeless but we decided to make a run for it . . .

## PART III

AT THE start it looked as hopeless as trying to stuff air back into a blow-out. There were four of them, then five, and they had lean, white Arab horses. They had us blocked to the north and east, and the fifth turned up from behind.

All that was left was our two mules, and the crazy hills to the west. They looked like new flower-pots, with the clay still wet, stood bottom-up to dry. It was the nursery story about Flopsy and Mopsy, and I was Cottontail Rabbit trying to hide from Mr. Macgregor. I would have told Lubin we didn't have a chance, and we might as well rein in and wait for it—but I couldn't catch up to talk.

In the first five minutes the riders from Jeldu had cut our lead in half, and you could begin to make out the rifles slung over their shoulders, and the black feet, kicking in and out as they hammered their horses.

No matter how hard I dug my feet into the mule's flank it just kept ambling—a kind of running walk, but none of the satisfying pololop of a good gallop. It wasn't until the going got steeper, and we were zig-zagging up a steep, wet clay cutbank that I looked back and saw we were gaining.

We cut into a rock ravine, and crossed right, along the slippery edge of a fresh hill. I looked back and saw the opposition was in trouble. The horse's feet wobbled, then splayed sideways, and the lead rider tumbled, with his rifle throwing clear as he went down and started to roll in the red clay.

The others came up to him while he was trying to catch his horse. We cut back, on a zag, passing along a clay ledge above them.

*"Takwasu!"* he was yelling at them. *"Tolo balu, takwasu!"*

The meaning of his yell got translated, fast. The tallest of the posse, a lean citizen in a yellow bandanna, threw his rifle clear of his black cape, and snapped a shot across my bows. I reached desperately for the carbine I didn't have, then tried to kick a couple of new miles-per-hour into my mule. It didn't do anything—the damn beast only had one speed forward.

I was getting ready to flop out of the saddle, before the others unlimbered their artillery, when Lubin, with a pistol, flipped three or four bullets down on the opposition.

They took cover then, and there was only one further shot. We came to an opening between a pair of two-story boulders, and found ourselves on a steep cutbank leading down to a spreading prairie. The rain began again.

Lubin was halted, waiting for me.

"We better keep moving," I called.

"Don't worry about them," he said. "No horse can make that last grade—or the path down, ahead of us. All we got to worry about is crossing the plain, there. Shano Meda. We've got fifty-five miles, in the open, to the Blue Nile."

"Let's worry about that when we get down there," I said. "Personally I think we're going to have to wait for a helicopter."

"Stick on," he said. "You'll find out how good a good mule can be."

*Twice, following the trail, we came to road-blocks.*

I loved the chunky black animal like a new wife by the time we hit the plain. He—or she, or whatever mules are—went down three miles of clay hill on edge. I patted her and suggested to Lubin we have a smoke.

"No time," he said. "I have an idea this rubber is going to go to the team that gets to Harry Carlin first. It's still a long ride to the Nile, and forty more miles to Debra Markos. Put your toes back in the stirrups and get moving."

## CHAPTER VIII

### HELLFIRE AND BRIMSTONE

SIX hours later, we'd laid forty miles behind us, zig-zag, and it must have been thirty, straight. Twice, following the trail, we came to road-blocks where there were a handful of skinny soldiers in tattered khaki shorts and jackets, waiting beside a log blockade. Twice we cut off around the rolling country, by-passing them out of sight.

Night came, just when the stirrup ring had sawed my big toes down to the bone, and Lubin stopped and bought rubber bread and laxative beer from a family of eighteen in a clay hut. We fed the mules then, and started off before the light. It was maybe a half-hour easy riding, with me keeping my mule nuzzled against the rump of Lubin's, in the dark, and only the sound of the unshod hoofs telling when we were crossing off the trail onto the grass or the rock.

The dawn came in and opened up shop like it was late and didn't want anybody to notice. We were on the lip of a row of terraced banks, falling down like steps toward a brown gash across a can-

yon. It was a minute before I saw the brown wash water—the Nile.

An hour later we were on the edge of the water, shoving westward, watching for some means of crossing. There was a ferry, someplace around, Lubin said. A film of morning smoke showed around a bend and we came to half a dozen natives recovering from a hangover. They had a matting stretched on poles, for a shelter, and a clutter of clay jars spread around. They had a raft, too. It was maybe ten by twenty, held together by a mare's-nest of straps, ropes and cross-poles. We rode up and I started to dismount but Lubin checked me.

"You're a holy man, Murphy," he said. "Just sit your mule and look prophetic. Make them help you dismount."

I stuck out my lower lip and tried to look like a prophet. Lubin swung down and sat on his heels, chatting. They were wrapped up in their black cloaks, in pairs, and they didn't look anxious to go into business. Lubin came back to my stirrup.

"They took a party across yesterday," he said. "They got paid and they got drunk. They don't want to work today unless we can put a little holy heat on them. You've got to swing into some kind of oration."

He bowed to me then, and waited.

"Hurry up," he said. "I don't give a damn what it is. Anything but make it sound like Hellfire and Brimstone."

I started off with odds and ends of songs I could remember, and snatches of prayers, loud. I finished with the Ten Commandments, pounding the pommel of my saddle and yelling every time I hit the "Thou Shalt Not's." One of them finally crawled out from under his cloak, while his woman muttered.

*"Ishi,"* he said. *"Ishi, Naga."*

"Give them another wallop," Lubin said. "And every time you think of it stick in the word *'wodyow.'* "

All I could think of was the words for Clementine, so I ran through them, punctuating the lyrics by yelling *'Wodyow!'* The first time they just kept repeating *'Naga, Ishi Naga,'* but I kept on, and the other men crawled out of bed and bowed at me a couple of times and one of them came over and held his hands for me to dismount.

"What does this *'naga'* mean?" I asked Lubin.

"Tomorrow," he told me. *"Mañana.* Pretty soon. Sometime. It's the closest they get to saying yes. They were trying to stall off until tomorrow until you *wodyow*-ed them into it."

Then he bowed to me and said, *"Da hinano, geta, Exavier estaling, geta, Exier meskin, geta,* you're quite a guy and I'm telling you so, *geta."*

They went down to the raft while he was kowtowing and he winked at me.

"Have they got any liquor left?" I asked him. "I could sure use a jolt after that ride."

"I'll have one for you, *geta,*" he said. "You're a holy man and you can't go around tanking up, *geta.* You're doing too well." All I could figure to do was perch on the slack of my cloak and look poignant. It wasn't hard. Lubin got next to the oldest of the boatmen, and they started running a loving-cup with one of the jars. He was having a good time, laughing at me.

They got the mules on the raft and after a couple of hours got them across. The river was a quarter-mile wide, and faster than a scared mouse. They landed the mules two miles downstream, then tracked the raft back, a couple of miles upstream, along the other bank, and swept back to join us with the paddles flying and the runaway current trying to keep them from making a landing.

When they got it moored, Lubin came ashore again and walked over toward me. He stood about twenty feet away, watching me, and scratching the blue-black stubble on his long chin.

"You're pretty good," he said. "Damned if there aren't moments when even I find it hard to believe you're not indigenous."

"My feet are frozen," I told him. "I've got a full cargo of fleas from that *tukul* where we got supper. These pants have cut off the circulation in my legs, and this damn wool cloak is rubbing my neck raw. I wouldn't keep doing this for ten dollars an hour."

He laughed. "I guess that's the part that lends conviction," he said. "There's nothing like misery and fleas to give a genuine air of being touched by the spirit."

I told him not to just stand there gabbling, to get moving so we could get across the Nile and I could scratch where it itched most. I couldn't decide whether I was too hungry to be thirsty or too thirsty to be hungry. "For God's sake, do something," I told him.

HE DUG a thaler out of his pocket then, and started bargaining for breakfast. The argument lasted maybe half an hour, and ended up with the ferrymen getting two thalers and us getting our mules transported, breakfast for two and a jar of *talla* for the road, and a greasy wooden cross off the neck of one of the women. Lubin tied it around my neck. Then he hunkered down beside me and got me to dig out the charred piece of paper I'd rescued from Penny Blair's bonfire. He took maybe twenty minutes, studying it.

"You didn't tell me there was a deadline on this," he said. "Look, this option, or concession, or whatever you want to call it, is only good for another couple of weeks. It runs out on the last day of the first month of the new year."

"You mean in January?"

"I mean in *Maskaram*. The Ethiopians have a neater calendar than we have. They have twelve months, all an even thirty days, and a short one, five days. New Year's starts on the eleventh of September. That's the first of *Maskaram*. On the seventeenth of *Maskaram* you get the Feast of *Maskal*, the Feast of St. Helen finding the True Cross. That's when the rains stop. Then two weeks more and the roads are dry enough to travel and—" he waved the charred paper at me— "this damn option collapses flat on its face."

"I don't give a damn," I grumbled. "One of these months I'm going to get something to eat, or I'll stuff you personally into the Blue Nile."

He went back to the shelter where the boatmen's women were heating something in an iron pot, and kicked the one that was stirring it. In a few minutes he got a bowl of something, and one of the ferrymen brought me another gourd of the stuff. He was bowing so hard and so often, as he came, I wasn't sure whether there'd be anything left when I got it. I made the sign of the cross over him, and he seemed pleased. I ladled a mouthful up with two fingers, and damn near scalded my tonsils. It was porridge, like mashed split-peas, but at least half of it was chili peppers.

"For God's sake, get me something to drink," I told Lubin. "This stuff is dynamite."

*"Shurro,"* he said. "Porridge."

He yelled *"Wuha antut!"* and one of the women cringed up with a gourd ladle of water. I reached for it but Lubin knocked my hand away, bowing all the while.

"Don't be a damn fool," he said. "You can't drink water here without sterilization. You wouldn't live a month. You can't even wash in the damn stuff without getting *kolo kussel*—a cute little native form of running ulcer."

"I got to have a drink," I said. He was busy with a vial of something, from his belt. He dropped a couple of black grains into the gourd, stirring it with his fingers. He handed it to me and it looked like grape juice. He gave me the vial, too.

"Potassium permanganate," he said. "Better hang on to it. I can drink the beer, but you're a sacred object."

It tasted like grade six when you chewed an indelible pencil, but it calmed down the burn from the porridge. I managed to finish the bowl.

I got up and handed the gourds back to the woman. "Let's get moving," I told Lubin. "If there's a deadline on this deal we'd better keep humping, and try to get to this Harry Carlin before the others."

"I got a better idea," Lubin said. "You wait here, and keep an eye on them. They'll have to come here to cross the river, and you can watch what their caravans look like, see who's teamed up with whom, and do a little eavesdropping."

I didn't like it, I said. The chances of keeping up this hermit act, after he'd got away, were too slim. I didn't think it would work.

He told me not to do too much thinking. *"Gwojo talut!"* he yelled at the ferrymen. "They'll make you a shelter. You just sit here, on your fanny, and keep your mouth shut and your eyes

*In a little more than an hour, I was under a shack they'd built around me.*

open. I'll cross over and pasture the mules. Then I'll come back for you when the others have passed. You'll be all right. You're *kiddus*—holy."

I started to argue with him, but he just kept bowing and saying *"Ishi, geta,* go back and sit down on your sacred hunkers, *geta,* go on, I got to get moving, *Exhavier estaling."* I sat down again and he went over to the shelter, talked to them for a while, occasionally pointing back at me and telling them something. Then he went down to the raft and they repeated the wild-eyed downstream skid across the river, with him aboard.

Two of the women came over and started poking sticks in the ground around me. I stayed still, and in a little more than an hour, with the boatmen back and helping, I was under a grass thatch shack they'd built around me. Then they bowed, and I blessed them. They went back to their own shelter and started tanking up on *talla* again. By about two o'clock in the afternoon they were soused and a couple of the women were amorous. They didn't seem to feel concerned about me. Their love-life, apparently, was conducted in the open, like their toilet facilities.

They were all asleep when the first of the caravans, following down the path along the bank, turned up from the Shano Plain. It was a white man with four stringy mules, three fly-bitten pack-horses, and six servants. Trouble trailed behind them like the smell behind a garbage scow. If the morale were any worse there'd have been murder.

Nobody paid me any attention. The white man was yelling in something that might have been Italian, and the servants were yelling back, and booting the horses to work off their peeve. I couldn't understand a damn word they were saying, but as time went on, and they got the ferrymen awake, and they kept waving their arms and yelling, it got to be pretty clear that the white man had hit the point where he was going to have to dig up some money or fold up his caravan and go home.

Then it blew up. I don't know what caused it, because I couldn't follow any of the language that was being kicked around. There was a tall Somali in a yellow handkerchief doing most of the talking and, one by one, the servants from the caravan drifted over to his side. The white man was left in the middle, with the boys from his mule-train clustered on one side, and the ferryboat crew on the other.

I just squatted, and looked pious.

*"Yellim,"* the Somali was shouting. *"Ba-Menelik-ymut, Yellim!"*

The white man had a fly-switch, the tail of a white horse on a leather handle. He made a pass at the Somali, and the guy ducked, then reached out and pulled the switch away from the boss. *"Ekown awurdut!"* the Somali yelled, and the others started unwinding the miles of half-tanned leather straps that bound the packs on the horses. They dumped the baggage on the ground and stood for a minute, waiting for the boss to open the argument again. All of a sudden he crumpled, sitting down on a rock and sticking his face in his hands and crying like a kid that spilled its ice cream cone.

THE ferrymen drifted out of the picture, heading back to their shelter and pretending they hadn't seen anything or anybody. The guy just sat and blubbered. The mule-men stood around for a few minutes, looking embarrassed, then they started leading the mules and horses

away. They left the baggage on the ground, spread around where they'd dropped it off the animals. One of the ferrymen and his woman got back under the cover of a blanket and picked up where they'd left off. The mules and horses edged away, back toward the Shano Plain. And pretty soon there was nothing new in the picture but the disconsolate Italian and his scattered baggage, me, and the camp of the ferrymen, beside the swollen chocolate waters of the Nile. God knows why they called it the Blue Nile.

I couldn't figure out who the Italian was, at first, but on the corner of one of the gasoline boxes, that were tied into pairs for pack-saddles, I saw the name *Romeo Falconi*. He was the Addis Ababa lawyer, I remembered, who had rich friends in France. But either the friends weren't as rich or as friendly as Penny Blair had thought, because the guy had run out his luck on the bank of the Blue Nile and just sat and whimpered.

He looked toward me once or twice, but decided I couldn't do him any good. He opened a couple of his boxes and poked around until he got out a bottle of Beaujolais wine and a couple of feet of salami. He finished lunch, then lay down and went to sleep beside his boxes. It hadn't been raining all day, I realized. But the sky was still running a competition to see how many clouds it could hold how close together. The sun didn't stand a chance.

A hyena poked in, from the cover of the cutbank of the river, and a couple of the ferrymen started yelling and throwing spears at it, but they didn't do any good. The spears bent, when they hit the rocks, and the hyena was miles away before they had pounded the points out straight enough to be ready for another throw.

Then there was the sound of fast hoofs, and a second caravan slid in to camp. This one was a different proposition. There were only two more servants than Falconi brought, but the animals were sleek, and the whole outfit had the kind of snap you see in a winning football team.

The boss of the crew was a big square-shaped man, like a blond version of Teddy Roosevelt, mounted on a blocky black mule with an English saddle. He had on a white sun helmet and a smile full of white square teeth. Beside him was an Ethiopian in a fancy khaki uniform, with a high-polished Sam Browne belt and an English holster filled with a .45 pistol. It looked like it might be a Webley, and the Ethiopian looked like he might know how to use it.

The magnate in the white hat just sat his beast, looking around, and the Ethiopian started barking orders. The boys ran a picket line out and staked it down, and the first of the pack animals were already tethered before the tail end came up. The last was a little white mule—and beside it, on a sleek chestnut riding-mule, was a girl with water-white hair and blue-gray eyes. It was Mari Tornquist, the gal I'd left behind me in a puddle of tears in the Goritza, that night. I started to get up and then I remembered I was a holy hermit on sentry duty. I just hunched over a little and watched, and hoped they wouldn't pay me too much attention.

It was a relief to hear somebody talk English for a change. The girl started it—Mari Tornquist.

"Can we cross the river here, Doctor?" she asked.

"Raphael says so," the square man answered. "He's arranging the price with the boatmen. I'd suggest that we camp, and watch them take a few of the mules across, before we venture onto their raft." Raphael turned out to be the Ethiopian with the pistol—their guide and interpreter. He had the boys put up a tent for them, and Mari and the Doctor guy dismounted. There was a cot for Mari, and a folding camp chair for the doctor. The tent was close enough to my shelter so that I could hear some of what they said. The door faced the other way, but the slanting light threw shadows across the canvas and I knew Mari was lying down, the doctor sitting up square and uncompromising, and they were drinking wine.

The wind would blow a little, and I'd miss part of a sentence. Then I'd hear a chunk of it, and then their voices would drop again. I would have sidled over, next to the tent-wall, but the boys were round and about the camp-ground and I didn't want to be caught off-base.

*Romeo Falconi*

They'd be in Debra Markos on the third day, the man said. They'd find Harry Carlin and the rest would be largely a matter of law, and legal formalities.

"Are you sure it was worth it, Dr. Granerus?" Mari asked. "It was such a horrible way for him to die. I hate to think that I had anything to do—"

"We have our country to consider, my dear," Granerus answered, in a thick, smooth voice. "You must remember that our very national survival may rest upon our trade in metals— the tungsten is an absolute essential for the alloys now in demand. In addition, I am sure that you will find the money a convenience. It is very seldom that a beautiful child like yourself finds herself in reach of many hundreds of thousands of pounds."

"What if the others get there first?" she said. "It may all be for nothing."

I didn't get his answer. The Italian finally woke up, and got to the door of the tent. He muttered something, and pretty soon he and this Dr. Granerus were yelling at each other in French. From what I gathered he wanted to hitch in with their expedition, and the doctor was telling him no, in loud and assorted terms.

He went off sulking then, and Raphael, the Ethiopian, came back from the raft to the tent.

"It will be safe for you to cross, now, Doctor and Madam," he said. "If you will be so kind as to go to the raft, we will take down the tent."

"Watch that that Falconi fellow doesn't get across with us," Granerus told him. "I don't want him trailing along with our party."

"I shall take care of that," Raphael said. "Please come now." They went upstream to where the raft was moored, and two of Raphael's boys bundled up the tent. Five minutes later they were all gone.

All except the Italian, Falconi. He started trying to talk the ferrymen into something, but they wouldn't listen to him. He ended up by pulling his boxes together into a square, and lashing a tarpaulin over it. He got more wine out, and after an hour's drinking he was blotto again. Only his feet showed, out between the boxes.

## CHAPTER IX

### THE BLUE NILE

I TRIED to spot Lubin, over on the other bank, but there wasn't anything but the dark blue-green of the trees, and the ropey chocolate water running fast along the riverbed. On our side there were just the three shelters—the matting roof where the ferrymen were cooking supper, the haphazard dugout in the boxes where Falconi was drunk, and my shelter. It was the kind of thing you'd see in a nightmare, where the perspective is lost and the people talk in languages you can't understand. Only the fleas were real, and the cold red clay between my toes.

I wondered when the others would turn up—and what I'd learn. I tried to figure out whether it was Matt they'd been talking about, when Mari Tornquist and the Granerus character spoke about killing—but it might have been him, or anybody. It was all crazy.

But the craziest thing was the sound.

It was faint at first, but it got louder. Any place else in the world I would have sworn it was a truck, whining up a heavy grade in low gear You could hear the exhaust, and even the grind when the driver changed gears. But the idea was cock-eyed. There wasn't any truck road. It wasn't until I saw the roof of the cab of the first one, lurching through the underbrush to the east, that I could believe it. There were two guards on mules riding ahead, and then the three trucks. They were weapons-carriers, six-wheel jobs, and you could see where the insignia of the Royal Air Force had been painted out, on the door panels. They were doing very nicely. On one grade the lead truck, running light, ran a line back from its winch and helped the others up. The rest of it was easy.

I guess the ferrymen had never seen automotive transport before. They watched for a while as the trucks approached, then they clustered together and eased back into the woods. They stayed then, but they were ready to run at the first noise. Falconi didn't stir.

One by one I started to pick out the people I knew The first I was sure of was Gubru David, unfolding his long black frame out of the truck cab Two others, from the next truck, turned out to be Finch-West and Bobolini As the last truck wheeled in, to park, a girl got down. It was Penny Blair.

David was looking at the tracks, and the mule-droppings where Granerus had set his picket-line.

"They've been here," he called. "Tell Mr. Saldanha they're about an hour, perhaps two, ahead of us." The others turned, watching the last truck. One of the servants had a short ladder, and he was setting it against the tail-gate. Another was rolling up the canvas door in the back of the tarpaulin that covered it. A little guy stepped down, a little guy with a sallow, scarred, face like a death-mask of Valentino. He wore the whitest suit and the shiniest black riding boots you'd be likely to find outside Abercrombie and Fitch. He stepped daintily, like a Persian cat crossing a gutter, and he had a gold-mounted riding crop under one armpit. There was a red silk handkerchief stuck in one sleeve. He was too damn pretty to be true.

*Gubru David*

His eyes were a shiny metallic gray, like new ball-bearings, and they didn't seem to have any pupils. He rolled them mathematically over the scene, and you could hear them click, almost, as he registered the things and the people before him.

"It has been an unpleasant journey," he said. "Who are these people? And where are the others?"

The rest of the party looked around at the huts and the river, but none of them answered. They seemed frightened of the little poppet with the steel eyes.

Then Gubru David came back. He'd been over talking to the ferrymen, and he'd stuck his head into the square of packing cases where Falconi snored.

"I believe there is time for us to cross the river yet today, Mr. Saldanha," he said. "Two caravans have been ahead of us, according to the boatmen. The first was Falconi here—" he gestured to the stack of unloaded gear— "and the other was that of Dr. Granerus, with Miss Tornquist."

Saldanha pouted.

"Answer my question," he said. "Who's this scoundrel—" with a wave of the rid-

ing crop in my direction— "and those others, beyond the camp?"

"This is an *Awahy,*" David said. "We called them *Fellaty* in Tigre. They are hermits, followers of the saint, Abouna Zerabrok, who counted the teeth of the serpents that encircle the world."

"You prattle too much," Saldanha said. "The others. Who are the others?"

"Boatmen," David said. "They have built the *mashagarya*—the raft to ferry across the river. They will transport us, for a price."

"Then for heaven's sake arrange it—don't bother me with these kitchen details," Salhanha snapped. "I shall talk business with the others while you do your work."

***Falconi was still out on his feet. Saldanha took a short swing and cut him across the face.***

I tried to keep my head bowed, as much as possible, and my eyes empty. But something in my appearance seemed to interest the half-pint in the white suit. He strolled toward me, slapping the thong of his crop against the pipe-clayed whiteness of his pants-leg.

I was more afraid of him than any of the others I'd met. Even Lubin. Lubin had turned over all the rocks on the bottoms of all the cesspools but he was weak. This guy had been evil for a long time, but he wasn't weak. He was little, sure, and he was dressed up pretty. But he'd planned every perversion in his life, and made money out of most of them. He walked toward me with the polished black boots mincing across the wet red

clay. And his eyes, that had never felt a human emotion, were ahead of him, poking me like steel rods.

How'd I know? How does a tramp know where he can get a sandwich without a sermon? He stopped in front of me and looked down, and I knew if he kept standing there more than a minute he'd know who I was and what I was doing.

HE NEVER got the minute. He asked me something, and then asked it again, and every time he changed the language. He knew I was a phony and he was playing with me, the way a cat plays with a head off a dead fish.

I dug deep into the things I could remember, and I came out with a sentence. *"Bism Ab, ou Weld, ou Menfous Kouddos, Hit!"* I told him. Lubin had trained me in the pronunciation. It meant, "In the name of the Father and the Son, and the Holy Ghost." The *"Hit!"* meant "Scram!"

I held the cross out at him, the wooden cross that Lubin had bought off one of the women. It didn't convince him, but it moved him back a couple of paces.

And while he was hung there, feeling he was right but not quite sure of the next step, Gubru David moved in.

"Do you wish to make trouble?" David asked.

"What do you mean?" the little guy said.

"I mean that you are exceeding the local proprieties," David cut in. "To these people who run the ferry, this man is a sacred thing. Without his blessing, we shall find it difficult to cross."

Saldanha's eyes held on me for a moment, then slid away. They were still ball-bearings, cold. I held the wooden cross out in front of me and muttered, *"Bism Ab, ou Weld, ou Menfous Kouddos,"* again. He shrugged, and followed David back to the packing-box dugout where Falconi was still snoring.

"Is this, too, a sacred object?" he asked, mocking.

"Romeo Falconi," David told him. "He tried to get to Carlin, himself, but he was short of money and his *negadis* left him."

"Pull him out," Saldanha said. You could see David didn't like the sergeant-major in the little guy's voice. He called something in Amharic and two of the mule-boys trotted over and lifted Falconi out of his hole. He wasn't pretty. He'd been crying, and the tears had cut pale paths in the clay on his face.

He was still out. Saldanha took a short swing with his crop, cutting him across the face. It wakened Falconi, but he wasn't quite sure what was happening.

He looked at Saldanha, then put a hand up and felt his face. "*Doucement,*" he said. Then he changed to English. "You will pay for that, my friend."

Saldanha laughed. "I am in a position to pay for anything I choose," he said. "What do you know of this Salodi Concession?"

"That's none of your business," Falconi said.

Saldanha reached out again with the crop, but he stopped the blow just before it landed. Falconi flinched. "I have made it my business," Saldanha said. "Answer quickly."

The others had come up, behind Saldanha. They were watching the by-play. Finch-West and Bobolini were smiling. The girl, Penny Blair, wasn't. Saldanha hit him again.

"Believe me, I know very little," Falconi said. He whined.

Saldanha looked down at Falconi and his boxes. They were old boxes, and they didn't have straps—just frayed ends of leather thong, and bits of rope.

"How much have you paid for this—outfit?" Saldanha said.

Falconi watched him. "Seven hundred thalers fifty," he said. "But here, five day's travel, it is worth more."

Saldanha took a blond leather notecase from his breast pocket. He took out two white bills.

"Forty pounds should cover it," he said. He didn't throw the money, or hand it. He just let it slip from his fingers onto the clay. They were bank-notes, English bank-notes.

"That's not enough," Falconi said. "That's hardly half, without anything for carrying it."

Saldanha didn't answer him. He turned to David and said, "Throw it in the river." David didn't move. "Did you hear me? I said throw it in the river," Saldanha barked.

"I heard you," David said. "It happens that I am not a *negadi.* If you can assure me that these boxes have been purchased, and inform me how you wish them disposed of, I can arrange it. I don't intend to do it myself, Mr. Saldanha."

Saldanha walked over toward David, and stood facing him. It was funny that one could be so white and so short, and the other so black and so tall. Saldanha was the one that backed down.

"Forgive me," he said. "These are details with which I should not have concerned myself. Please see that they are arranged."

"*Ishi, geta,*" David said, and I could hear one of the women of the ferrymen snicker. The little guy had lost face, and he knew it. David stayed polite. He beckoned to one of the *negadis,* and said, "*Hullu yittalu!*" pointing to the boxes. Falconi's hand went out, across the clay, and closed on the big white bank-notes. One by one the boxes went into the river.

Falconi was getting sober now, and the more he thought the more pleased he was at getting some cash out of his still-born caravan. For a while.

David had arranged with the ferrymen, and they had moored the raft at a piece of the bank that was level enough for the trucks to approach. He was going to try ferrying one of the trucks first, you could see, then move the rest of the outfit. Little Saldanha had sent up a canvas camp-chair for himself, and he was directing operations. He wasn't bossy to David, but he gave his orders as suggestions. Some of them were pretty sound.

When the first truck was loaded you could see it was straining the raft pretty hard, but there seemed to be a good chance it could make it to the far bank.

"Shall we start now?" David asked.

"In a few minutes," Saldanha said. "I should prefer to eat, first."

One of the boys opened a picnic-box deal, and five or six bottles of wine. He unloaded a folding table from the second truck and spread it out. Falconi came up, then.

"I trust you will be kind enough to give me a bite of food and a mouthful of wine, before I start back to Addis Ababa," he said.

Saldanha looked at him.

"You're too trusting," he said. "You have the money. Buy your own food."

Falconi thought he was joking.

"But it is English money," he grinned. "These people cannot, of course, change so large an amount."

Saldanha poured himself a glass of wine and held it up. "You should have

thought of that before you completed the sale," he said, and sipped the wine. Falconi had the bills out, fumbling them in his hands.

"I'll pay," he said. "Surely you won't refuse to sell a man food."

Saldanha didn't answer. He had a mouthful of bread, and he spoke around it, to David.

"Remove him," he said. "His noise is unpleasant."

A couple of the *negadis* shouldered Falconi back, from the table and from the camp area. He stood for a minute watching them, like he was trying to suck up enough memory, out of somewhere, of what it was like to be a man and act like one. He didn't make it. Just turned, and strayed off to the east along the riverbank. Saldanha watched him go, then turned back to the food. He didn't see, from where he sat, that Falconi had stopped, staying hidden behind a clump of the yellow *maskal* daisies, and watching. I had an idea Saldanha was going to regret it.

The others were laughing, and they started to talk about the objective of their caravan. Only Penny Blair seemed disturbed. She bit her lip, and from time to time looked off the way Falconi had gone.

IT WAS Finch-West who spoke loud enough so that I could get the drift of their talk. He'd started on his third bottle of wine, and he was shining through his brown hair and his brown eyes and his tan skin.

"It's very simple," he said. "A prime requirement of the Salodi Concession is that a definite action be undertaken by the holder of the concession before the date at which the contract lapses. That action consists of selecting a specific area, 100 kilometers square, for immediate development. After this has been chosen, and staked, a further five-year period is permitted for development which must, in the course of the five years, show a minimum of one million thalers, Ethiopian, production of raw materials."

"If there is even a small percentage of the tungsten you expect, that should be extremely simple," Saldanha said. "We've had excellent results with our Portuguese scheelite ores, and they weren't nearly as rich as the wolframite samples Douras showed me."

"The stakes are the only hitch," Finch-West said. "There are three potential claims to the estate of old Salodi—but only the claimant who can prove to have staked the initial area, before the deadline, can succeed to title."

Bobolini cut in them, for the first time. "In other words, M'sieu Carlin," he said. "If we obtain from M'sieu Carlin the map of his staking, and the agreement to assign that work to us, as our agent, we have no question?"

"No question," Finch-West said. "Douras is sure of it. And Douras, through his hotel, misses very little of the facts that concern either Ethiopic or Nordic citizens of Addis Ababa."

"It would be most unfortunate if there were any question," Saldanha said, silkily. "Perhaps you have heard that we, of the Portugese Tungsten, are not persons of great timidity."

"I've heard," Finch-West said. "You were convicts, I believe. You formed an association, even while in prison, to develop the ores you had located."

"Accurately stated," said Saldanha. "All of us have had unfortunate differences with the law. And I can assure you that there are among us persons amply skilled and experienced in dealing with—ah—associates who are unable to fulfill their promises."

Penny Blair cut in. "What do we get out of it?" she said. "Each of us, I mean. And how can we be sure?"

Saldanha set down his glass. "I wonder what happened to Chiffara Salodi," he mused. "I wonder what happened to Matthew Murphy. Perhaps the most concise way to answer your question is to point out what you can be sure of in event you should decide to alter your cooperation."

"What about the Tornquist woman?" Penny asked. "From what David said she's already across the Nile, headed for Carlin. She's got a sort of claim to the concession. How do we know she isn't going to steal the whole damn thing out from under our noses—she and that Granerus that's with her?"

"You are being too frank for your own good," Saldanha said. "If, however, you

are sure you wish to know—Dr. Granerus isn't with Miss Tornquist—except physically. He happens, through the kindness of certain mutual friends, to be my agent."

I almost got up then, to ask a couple of questions myself and because I'd had about all the smooth deviltry I wanted out of the pipe-clayed little devil in the camp beside me. I held on.

"Now that I have eaten, we cross the river," Saldanha said.

David looked at him for a little, then bawled out something to the ferrymen. They were waiting at the bank with their poles, and when he called they cast their lines loose, and the raft with the first of the trucks swept out into the channel.

*Arthur Finch-West*

They were nearly halfway across, and perhaps half a mile down the stream near a bend, when the raft snagged on something and hung, with one corner riding high as the raft wheeled about it, and the truck tilting up and up until it hung over the brown water by its lashings.

You could see it fall, first. Then there was the twang of the rope breaking, and, long afterward the way it seemed, the splash. The raft shuddered and swept clear again, into the channel. The boatmen were poking it back toward our bank.

The Blair girl, who had pulled away from the rest of the group, was squatted on the ground within an arm's-length of me. She looked at me, and decided I couldn't speak any language she'd know, and started to talk to me. Talk at me, I mean.

"You're an ugly-looking object," she said. "But if you got your body cleaned up a little, and your holy Christianity toned down some, I think I'd pick you over the rest of these dogs around. You know you sort of remind me of a guy I could have gone for, if he hadn't been quite so stand-offish."

I nodded, and blessed her. That was all the conversation they'd issued with my act.

"I got an idea you're going to have some graves to pray over, before we get out of here," she said. "That Saldanha isn't human. And Finch-West isn't much better. One of these days they're going to run into somebody that's longer on pistol and shorter on temper. Aw hell, that's probably just wishful thinking. Go on back and mumble over your beads. Either we're going to get across this damned river or we aren't, and either way won't be any skin off your belly." She'd been drinking pretty heavy. There were no edges on her words.

I blessed her again, and bent down. She got up and walked over to where Finch-West was standing, watching the boatman try to get what was left of the raft back and moored. The little guy, Saldanha, was standing by himself. I tried to figure out what the change was that had come over him, since the truck spilled into the drink. Then I knew it. I guess it was smell as much as sight. He

was scared. Scared stiff. He was watching the twisted chocolate water and the creamy wake the raft left as the boatmen tracked it back up the stream. He slapped his crop against his leg, still, and he stood straight the way men under five-five can manage. But there was a sort of mist over the hard steel eyeballs, and I would have bet his sweatband was wet under the white helmet.

I looked around to see if any of the boatmen's women were free, So I could wave for another gourd of water. And I almost missed the boat.

I had poked into my waitsband and taken out the vial of potassium permanganate Lubin left me, when out of the corner of my eye I saw David. He was beside one of the boatmen, and they were walking toward the group in front of me, where Finch-West stood with Bobolini. But they weren't looking at the clay path before their feet. They were watching me.

I bent my head down, as though in meditation, but I kept watching. They came up to Finch-West and David spoke to him, earnestly. Finch-West turned to watch me, too. So did Bobolini.

I tried to think of anything I had said or done that might have given my disguise away. I couldn't figure it, but the boatman was hammering out Ethiopian to the others, and he was pointing at me.

For a few seconds I thought of trying to get to the raft, and cut it loose before they could close on me. But there were still two boatmen on it, trying to repair the damage the truck had done, and it was hopeless. There were only two things left—land and water—and the land was out of the question without a fast mule and a good start.

I got up and made a sign of blessing, and started to stroll toward the bank of the river. I tried to move slowly, to keep from getting anything started, and I found I had to hobble because the long squat on the cold clay had cut the circulation and both my legs were asleep. I wondered how cold the water was, and if even the swollen stream of the flooded river had the *kolo kussel,* the native ulcer infection, of which Lubin had warned me.

I was perhaps twenty paces from my shelter, and was just learning how to use

*Joam Saldanha*

my legs again, when David called out something to me. He had a laugh in his voice, and it was a question of some kind, but whether it was Amharic or Galla or Geez I couldn't have guessed.

I said, "*Naga, ishi naga,*" trying to sound unbothered and authoritative, but it didn't come out very convincing.

"*Coy*! Stop where you are!" David said. He started toward me, and I cut and ran for it. I had a thirty-foot lead on him, and it was only fifty or sixty yards to the edge of the water. I went in with a sprawling bellyflop, and lashed around for a while in the smothering black cape before I got my hands free. The chocolate water was sweeping me downstream, end over end.

When I got my head clear I looked back. Saldanha, the little guy in the white pants, had broken an express rifle and was loading it. He set the sights, too. He was calm, too damn calm for my good. I waited until he swung the piece to his shoulder then I held my breath and went under, for as long as I could stand. It's funny how long you can stand, when there's a pint-size sadist with a sporting rifle waiting for you to stop.

I came up for a quick gulp, and ducked again before he squeezed off the trigger. A bullet makes a flat, hard sound when

it hits the water near you—like clicking stones together. I hit a boil of current, and came up again without meaning to. This time his bullet sprayed my face full of water, but didn't hit. Then I stayed down until I was sure I was past accurate range. He fired two more shots but they kept getting wider. It was a half-mile now, widening, and I was past the bend where the truck had spilled.

I tried to make the far bank then.

That's all it was. A try. I was pinned down by the current, running down the middle of the Blue Nile like a marble in a slot, and no matter how hard I pawed and kicked I didn't seem to get any closer to the bank. I'd make a few yards and then a sweep of current would spin me back to the middle again. Even without shoes, I was tiring. I started to wonder how my body'd look when it joined the White Nile, at Khartoum. Then I spotted the tree-trunk. God made it. It was up to Murphy to catch hold.

## CHAPTER X

### BAREA DRUMS

I GUESS there were crocodiles in the Blue Nile. I guess there were rapids, too. But I didn't have time to worry about either of them. I was tired and I was cold, and unless I could catch the tree-trunk, bobbing ahead of me in the current, I wasn't going to be alive enough to care by the time the rapids or the crocodiles came along.

It was about twenty or twenty-five feet long, with a few broken branches and a snarl of frayed roots, bobbing ahead of me in the center of the current, just out of reach. I tried to pull off my burnoose to free my arms, but I didn't have the wind or the energy. I got within three arm's-length of the tree once, then we hit an eddy and it wheeled away from me and I passed it. I got to the dangerous place, where you want to rest, and none of it is worth trying very hard for. The sun came down along the saddle of the hills, and flattened out at the bottom like it was tired, too.

Then I remembered Matt. I didn't matter so much. I couldn't figure a dozen people in the world that would stop to read the fine print, if they saw my name in the obituary column. But Matt was different. Matt had meant something to a lot of people. He'd been trying to do something. And somebody had killed him, coldly and quickly, because he crossed the supply-lines for their own greed.

I don't know whether it was a change in the current, or an extra spurt of energy, but I caught the log. It slipped once, turning its smooth bole under my fingers. Then I got a root, and held on.

I had some trouble holding it—my right hand didn't seem to be working—and I realized I still had the fingers wrapped tight around the little vial of permanganate crystals that Lubin had given me. I held it in my mouth until I got the log rolled into its stablest position, and twisted a couple of loops of my cotton belt around the stumps of the roots.

I didn't know where I was—and I was drifting farther out of the picture with every movement of the slipping brown tide—but I was still alive and sooner or later I was bound to get ashore. I was colder'n a Maine winter, and I was hungry and thirsty. But I was damned if I was going to get out of the game while I could still kick.

I dumped a few of the permanganate crystals into my palm, and let the river-water run across them. It made purple streamers, and I lapped them up. It seemed sort of senseless—but it was the only way to get a drink without risking the Blue Nile, straight, and there were enough risks without that.

The wind came up and it was colder than the water, so I slid back off the log deeper into the current, trying to make out someplace where it'd be possible to get ashore. The breeze helped for a while, pressing me and the log toward the far bank. But just when I was deciding to cast loose and try for the shore the river swung again, and the eddy tossed me back to mid-stream.

It was almost completely dark when I saw another river, feeding into the Nile from the north. As soon as it narrowed down again, I told myself, I'd make a stab at the shore. I waited until the Nile had soaked up the new tributary and shrunk back into its normal channel,

then I cast loose the hitches of cotton with which I'd lashed myself to the log.

I was ready to strike out, with sixty or seventy feet of fast water between me and the bank, when the log grounded. It was a sandbar cast up by the tributary, and the log jarred, then rolled and swung. I went under, and was trying to get back to the log again, and hold on, when my feet touched. Ten minutes later I was ashore. My legs had taken a beating from the rocks and roots, and the grass with which I pulled myself clear of the water onto the bank was coarse and sharp-edged.

There was an animal of some kind, rustling in the bushes around me, but I was too beat-up to care.

I squeezed as much water as I could out of the felt poncho, and wrapped up in it, tucking it under my feet. It was thick enough that, even wet, it kept in some body heat, and after thirty or forty minutes I was a little warmer. The moon had started to rise, and there were holes enough in the leafage overhead so that I could see openings between the trees.

At first I thought it was just the hammer of the blood, starting to work through the chill. But it kept on and a slow, monotonous rhythm began to show through it.

It didn't sound like a drum, the way they have them in the movies, but I couldn't figure anything else it could be. *Bum-bum*, it said. *Boom. Boom. Boom.* Then there'd be a pause and it would repeat it. *Bum-bum. Boom. Boom. Boom.* And over, and over.

I didn't know who was doing the drumming, but I didn't care much. I had to get food, and I would have traded five years' living for a smoke. I wasn't getting anyplace trying to warm up a wet burnoose, and I might as well break camp and try to track down the drum.

I guess I talked out loud. "Anyway," I said, "when I come to think about it, the only real savages I've met here weren't natives."

My voice sounded loud and unreal. I got up and looked around for a stick, something to use to poke ahead of me into the darkest places, and to keep my hands from feeling so damn empty. I saw a dead branch on a tree, but when I went to break it off my hands closed on two fistfuls of thorn. And about fifty or sixty steps behind me somebody laughed.

I froze, and I could feel the blood from the thorns.

It was a crazy laugh, and it took me a minute to identify. It sounded human but it wasn't. It was one of those damn hyenas. And it was a good thing—it got me mad, and it got me moving.

"To hell with you, Joe," I said. "Club or no club I'm going to bust out of these bushes and dig myself up something to eat. If you want to argue about it, you better start, because I'm not going to wait around."

There was a snuffle, and the pad of footsteps. But they were receding.

THE moon was brighter now, and the going wasn't too bad underfoot. Less than half a mile and I was out from under the thorn-trees, and I could look back at them and pick out the glint of the river where it widened at a bend. It was hard to tell where the drum was beating, but it seemed clearer now, and the chances of finding something or somebody were better in the open. There was a low ridge of hills ahead, and a little to the left there was a nick in them that might be a pass. I turned toward it, and as I got nearer it the notes deepened, and the sound of the drum was loud.

The grass, which had been thick and coarse near the trees, got spotty, and there were bare patches of clay and little trickles of water running down through pathways of round, flattened stones. It was cold but the walking warmed me up a little. I wasn't feeling too bad.

Then I heard it, behind me.

I'd crossed a little runlet, and I stopped to try to pick the easiest path ahead. The only sound was the sound of my footsteps—but they didn't stop when I did. I was getting light-headed, I told myself, and made myself go on again, fifty paces. Then I stopped short.

But the sound didn't. There were three footsteps after I'd stopped. The hackles were standing on the back of my neck, and I stood there, and made myself keep standing for what seemed like hours after I knew I was going stark mad if I didn't move. There was no sound. There was nothing that the moon

showed, either above the low horizon behind me or in the dappled shadow of the terraces that fell back toward the river.

I'd forgotten all about the drums—they'd just become a part of the background, like the wobble of a refrigerator you've lived with for a long time. But when they stopped I jumped. The silence had become an evil thing, and the more of it there was the more menacing it became.

"I'll give it one more try," I told myself. "Maybe it's just I'm getting lightheaded from exposure. Maybe it isn't anything but the blood in my ears, or the little runlets of water splashing back around the rocks after I cross."

I started again, trying to make my steps sound even and unhurried. I went fifty steps, a hundred, two hundred. I was counting them out. At three hundred I couldn't hold out any longer. I reached my foot out to take the three-hundred-and-first, but stiffened it before it hit the ground. There was just one more step, behind me. Whoever it was had been waiting for me to try to trick him again, and he almost caught the halt.

I slid to the ground, silently, to make the most of the silhouettes against the sky-glow, and I looked back and watched. There were a hundred things I could do—but none of them seemed any better or any worse than the rest. I could call out, lying into the darkness, telling my shadow that I was armed and I saw him and I'd shoot if he didn't come forward with his hands high. But he wouldn't be English and I didn't know the words in Amharic, or Geez, or Galla.

I could start again—but all I'd gain would be a change of scene, and I'd lose the advantage I had. I was on higher ground, and I'd be able to see him, even if he crawled, before he was closer than fifteen-twenty feet.

Or I could sit there and wait, and go crazy.

I decided that was the easiest, and for the first long minutes I was feeling pretty confident I could outlast anybody. But time started to get all tangled up, and some of the minutes took hours and then the hours started to split up again, into minutes, like laboratory mice hopped up with hormones and reproducing until the cages were full and they had to lock the doors to keep them from breeding their way out into the halls, and the fields, and filling the city.

"That's about enough of that, Murphy," I told myself. "You better give yourself a little assignment, some sensible thinking for a change, or you'll come out of this with your eyes empty and your lips flapping."

There wasn't any sound. There wasn't anything to see. Just the moon, crawling higher over the flat tops of the mimosa thorns down beside the river, throwing twisted shadows across the curve of the hills and the terraces.

There wasn't anything quite level, or quite straight.

"Nobody brought you here," I told myself. "You came here on your own steam. You wanted to find out who killed your brother Matt. It's about time you started thinking. You'd better work at it. Or blow your top."

You can't think that way, I found. I could make pictures of the people that might have killed Matt, but I couldn't analyze anything.

It started with an old Ethiopian, Likemakwas Chiffara Salodi, and an option on a mapful of mountains. Then he got spitted on a spear and there were three people left to claim his option—a lanky inkspot named Ato Gubru David, a blonde Swede girl called Mari Tornquist, and a greasy little number, John Bobolini, who might or might not be the son, by Salodi, out of the Portuguese madam that ran the night spot, back in Addis Ababa.

They were the inner circle. And around them were three guys suposed to represent high finance, dealing for the mountain. There was Valter Granerus, a blond walrus; Joam Saldanha, a polished little monkey with cruel eyes; and Romeo Falconi, the kind of guy that never quite lasted out a hand long enough to gather the chips.

The rest of it was just a rat-race. There was an exiled Texan named Harry Carlin, supposed to have prospected Salodi's country and staked a rich tungsten find; there was Arthur Finch-West, a hopped-up muskrat with an English accent who seemed to be living off a girl

with a sharp shape and round heels called Penny Blair; there was Anastasia Lasta at the Goritza, Cyril Douras at the hotel; Simmons of the U.S. Legation, Desta Masal of the Ethiopian Government, Amda Jesu, a double-crossing Addis cab-driver— hell, it might be anybody that killed Matt; anybody that knifed the six-toed boy, Zelucca; anybody that speared old Salodi. The only thing I was sure of was what I saw: Arthur Finch-West shot a friendly Negro named Van Buren.

The rest of it would just have to work itself out.

THERE was still no sound from my shadow, and even though the moon was bright I couldn't see any rock that mightn't turn out to be an Ethiopian—or any Ethiopian that probably wasn't a rock.

Then the drum started again. *Bum-bum. Boom. Boom. Boom.* For a minute I thought I caught a flicker of light, through the saddle of the hills. But it wasn't repeated. There was still no sound from the one behind me—or the ones behind me.

For all you could see or hear they might have gone, or maybe they'd never been there at all.

I got up and started to walk again, toward the drum. The slope of the hills around got steeper, and the path climbed.

When the path reached its crest and began to drop again I stopped quickly and turned back, dropping low to pick up as much silhouette as the sky provided.

This time I scored. There were at least two, maybe three, trotting behind me. Then they dropped, too, and there was nothing again. I couldn't take any more of it. I got up and went toward them.

All I could think of was the Holy Trinity. "*Bism Ab, ou Weld, ou Menfous Kouddos,*" I told them, walking slow and waiting to see whether it'd turn out to be spears or bullets.

They were hidden again, against the earth, so I stopped when I got to the place I'd seen them last, and stood quite still.

"*Lucky, lucky, lucky!*" I told them, remembering the Galla phrase for "Snap into it!"

Whatever it was going to be, I wanted to get it over with.

It worked. I didn't see them or hear them at first. I picked up the smell of rancid butter, and wet fur. Then there were four of them around me, and I could see the points of their spears over the skyline.

They didn't say anything so I tried my blessing again. They didn't seem to like it.

"*Yellim Christyan,*" one growled. "*Bism Illahi, Yellin Christyan.*" That went on for a while.

I just chattered.

"O.K.," I told them. "*Yellin* Christian, if you like. *Bism Allah,* if you want to keep your own religious prejudices. *Bism Mohammet.* But I wish one of you characters had a cigarette you weren't using."

You'd have thought I was the Ethiopian Bob Hope. All three of them broke out laughing.

"Ceegareet," one of them told the others, and they laughed again. For a while I thought I must have stumbled on to the Amharic version of the traveling salesman story, but I guess it was just the way I mispronounced things that tickled them. One of them squatted to the ground and buried his head in his fur jacket.

It didn't seem to have any shape—just a lot of fur sewed around him. When he came up he had a smoke burning, and he held it out to me with the glow cupped in his palms.

I kept it covered, while I took a drag, and my lungs filled out again and I grew two feet taller. The food didn't matter so much now.

The others shared the butt in turn, then the owner pinched the fire out between his fingers.

"O.K.," I said. "And now, what comes next?"

They chattered for a while, then one of them took me by the arms and turned me back in the direction we'd been headed.

"*Na,*" he told me. "*Nasty. Lucky, lucky, lucky,*" and he set off at a lively trot.

*Though they didn't prod me with their spears, I could see that stopping would be considered a very unfriendly act.*

There wasn't any doubt I was supposed to follow. The three behind were carrying their spears low, and though they didn't prod me I could see that stopping would be considered an unfriendly act.

I started to walk, then trot behind the leader.

When I first got to Addis Ababa I thought people were kidding when they talked about the wild tribes. I'd changed my mind.

Only it took a time to remember the details. There were the Danakili, but they were down in the southern desert, between Somaliland and the hills. There were the Adalese, but they were in the desert too, to the north. It must be the Barea, I decided. They were someplace in the northeast, around Lake Tsana.

"Barea?" I said, trying to pretend it was a whole sentence.

There was a laugh from behind me.

"*Ow,*" he said. "*Barea, al hamdu l'Illahi.*"

"That's all I needed," I told them. "Even Kilroy never got this far off base." I waited for the laugh, but I must have lost my grip. There wasn't any answer but the pad of bare feet.

It was maybe half an hour before we saw the fires. The drum had stopped again, and the fires were just popping up. First one, then half a dozen. Around them you could catch the shapes of the tribesmen.

It looked like there must be at least a hundred.

It was a box canyon, and only through the pass at the southeast, where we came in, could the place be approached. Around it the cliffs stood three and four hundred feet high. In the moonlight they looked like stone.

*"Tazi Takwula-bate now,"* the spearsman in front said. *"Na."*

I was getting better at the language. *"Na"* meant "come," and I wasn't in any position to argue. *"Ow,"* I told him, and ten minutes later we were past the sentries and into the middle of a ragged circle of low fires. I looked around, trying to locate the boss.

Up against the canyon wall, under an overhanging ledge of rock, there was a long black wool tent set up. The flaps were staked out high, so you could see most of the interior.

There were a dozen other people in the tent, but you couldn't see them. You couldn't take your eyes off the monster in the middle.

He was shaped like one of those Mickey Mouse balloons that got blown up wrong. In places he was almost normal. In others he was hideously bloated. His legs, especially. They were standard from the hip to the knee, and the ankle to the toes, but between knee and ankle they were puffed out in thick cylinders, like logs sawed off a telephone pole, and the skin was drawn splitting-tight around them.

His left hand, too, was bloated. It looked more like an udder on a prize Guernsey than a hand.

The rest was relatively unremarkable.

He had on two felt hats, one over the other, and a bright scarlet shirt cut high-neck, like the one Stalin wears for photographs. The lower half was khaki shorts and woven sandals and a pair of revolver belts heavy with cartridges. His face was plump, the color of a smoked wiener. He had a pair of black handlebar moustaches and eyes so deep in the folds of skin you couldn't tell if they had any color.

He was wedged in a huge barrel-shaped chair of woven bamboo, and he had a pistol with an ivory handle hung from his right forefinger by the trigger-guard.

He was the boss. There wasn't any doubt about it. The only question was if he was human.

One of the spearsmen, the four that picked me up, bent almost double, and spoke in a humble whisper. The boss didn't look at him, or at me. He just shook his head.

*"Bohalla,"* he said. *"Chikkel chikkel illalow. Gera-Kond-Zaytan lihad ifalligallow."*

I didn't know what he said. I didn't know what he meant. It was strong medicine, whatever it was.

At the far end of the tent a scrawny Somali took up a padded stick and started to beat a drum. It was the size of a wash-tub, and there were still claws on the legs of the skin that covered the top and dangled down over the sides. It was the same beat I'd heard in the thorn-trees, but it was faster.

It said, *Bu-bum. Bum-bum-bum,* now. And from the shadows, outside the light of the fires, the boys started to bring in the mules. They were sleek beasts, and about half of them had silver ornaments on the leather straps of their neck and breast harness.

Nobody seemed to be watching me, and I had a hunch that if I didn't do something quick I was going to skip supper, too. There was a pot of something on the fire nearest me, and I sidled toward it. I didn't care if it was steak or stew—if I could get it past my tonsils it'd be worth trying.

Nobody seemed to be paying much attention, and I picked up a gourd beside the pot and started to dip it in. But I guess they were watching me closer than it seemed. My arms were struck down from behind, and I felt a rope or a strap whipped around them and I was jerked off my feet. Then something was pulled down over my head, and when I started to yell somebody clipped me one behind the ear. . .

*(End of Part III)*

ILLUSTRATED BY HARVE STEIN

# PERISCOPE

By

ALEC HUDSON

*The first salvo after we showed our conning tower was a straddle.*

# PATROL

PETER MICHAEL SMITH III, Lieutenant Junior Grade, United States Navy, was our gunnery officer. In the opinion of Peter Michael Smith III, he was good. That was before he made his first patrol in *Sailfin*. That first patrol of his didn't do much to sustain his ego. I suppose he had visualized it much differently. *Sailfin* just had one of those patrols that every submarine makes sometimes. We spent two full months at sea, and we didn't do any more damage to the enemy than as though we had spent those two months in port.

One day along toward the end of that

patrol, a search plane came down the pike on an off-scheduled hour. It caught us on the surface. There wasn't any damage done. We were down deep before it got in to bombing distance, but we were sighted all right. The next morning we had company in the area.

The Japs sent out a *kaibokan* to keep occupied. Daylight next morning she was there, obviously not going any place, just hanging around waiting for us to play the wrong card. She had too shallow a draft for us to hit her with torpedoes, unless maybe we had a flat calm sea, which we didn't. The *kaibokan* didn't have much luck in locating us. The sound conditions were bad. It was kind of a stand-off. She knew we were there but she couldn't find us. We could find her all right, but we couldn't do much about it. Once she dropped a string of depth charges down near the horizon, probably giving some poor whale a very bad day.

That night we ran down to the southern end of the area, expecting to shake her off. But in the morning there she was, or maybe another just like her. We played hide and seek with her all day. I could see it was getting on the Old Man's nerves. He was trying to figure some way of getting at that *kaibokan,* some reasonable way—I hoped.

Along about there hours before sunset, boiling up the ladder into the conning tower comes my friend Smith. He had a couple of maneuvering board diagrams covered with lines and sketches.

"Captain," he said in an opening he obviously had been rehearsing to himself, "I believe we can engage that *kaibokan* by gunfire with all the advantages on our side."

THE CAPTAIN listened to him expound his theories. Smith had figured out that just about sunset we could maneuver so the Jap would be silhouetted against the evening sky while we retained the weather gauge. The sea could be put on our disengaged quarter too. Then we could close in to about two thousand yards submerged and surface with a rush. If we surprised this bird we could overwhelm her with gunfire before she could develop any resistance. We could close in, and while we swept the decks with machine-gun fire, we could pump her hull full of holes with the three inch.

The captain said, "Well if we had to fight this *kaibokan* in a gun action, that would be the way to do it. And I'll grant we might jut barely get away with it. But this fellow has three times our gun power. In this wind and sea he has a steady gun platform and he has more speed than we have. Sooner or later he could pick his own conditions of battle, unless we were lucky enough to disable him right off. I'm not going to take that gamble with those odds against us."

Everything would have been all right, but Pete just wouldn't take no for an answer. He went all over his arguments, and amplified and embellished them. The second time through the skipper gave him shorter answers. Of course the Old Man had been over all this in his mind and rejected a gun action by just good common sense. At the end of a patrol like that, everybody's temper is a little short anyway. I heard him give a low sort of growl, and I tried to catch Smith's eye and tell him to lay off. But Smith was only more deeply convinced by listening to his own argument, and he went right on, in the face of all the storm warnings.

Finally the captain shouted, "No, Smith, damn it no! I'm not going to throw away *Sailfin* and murder eighty men." His face got red, and he went on and laid out poor Pete for inspection. He told Smith he didn't have good sense. He told him to get the hell out of the conning tower and stay out until he was called for.

Of course the Old Man shouldn't have bawled him out like that in front of everybody, but you know how one thing leads to another, especially after two months at sea. Peter Michael Smith III, was crushed. I didn't see him again until next morning, when he had the watch. We left the area next day, without getting a shot at anything.

We all knew this patrol's report was due for one of those endorsements about it being "regretted that no opportunity was afforded," et cetera, et cetera and how "this patrol is not considered successful for purposes of awarding combat

insignia." I suppose young Peter Smith had counted on polishing up a new combat submarine pin and flashing it in the brown eyes of Betty Garner. Lots more stolid citizens than he have pursued the bubble Reputation, even in the cannon's mouth, to impress girls far less attractive than Betty. I admired his taste. I could understand how disappointed he might be.

A few days before we got in to Pearl he came in to see me while I was checking over the deck log. "Sir," he said, more formally than usual, "I've decided that I will request transfer out of submarines to general service."

"Sit down, Pete," I invited, "and get it off your chest. What's wrong?"

It seemed that everything was wrong. His self-esteem had taken a deep dive from its previous high altitude. I knew that the boys had been riding him a little. Even Bryson, the assistant engineer officer, who was Smith's particular buddy, had joined in the kidding. But usually Pete was immune to ordinary insult. He didn't think he was doing well. He was sure the captain had no confidence in him. He hinted that he felt the captain wasn't aggressive enough. I let that pass. I knew that if he stayed with us, he would get his belly full of the Old Man's aggressiveness.

I told him to forget it. Nobody had it in for him. Everybody felt that way after an unsuccessful patrol. I told him to go ashore for the two weeks' rest period and forget everything about *Sailfin* and her company. After that he could come back if he wanted to and we would talk it over. He would feel better when he got relaxed a little.

I FORGOT about things myself after we got in. I took a little of my own prescription. Then after we had been back about a week they had a dance at the Base. I went down alone. I sat down over in the corner at a table all by myself. Who should join me there but Mr. P. M. Smith himself.

I was surprised. He was alone. It didn't look as though his morale had improved one bit. I asked him, "Where's Betty? Isn't she with you tonight?" and then it all came out.

"She's off somewhere with that aviator friend of hers, guy named Douglas off the *Niagara*."

He hadn't seen Betty but to say hello to since we had gotten in. Before he sailed last time he had been pretty sure he had everything fixed up with Betty. When we got back from two months' patrol, he found out that he had definitely lost first place.

"Damned aviator," Smith complained, "nothing better to do than stay in port and entertain the women while people are out fighting the war."

I told him that there was another side to that business of a girl in every port. He repeated that old canard about *Niagara* bending all her efforts to being the oldest carrier, letting anyone who may struggle to be the best. I asked him if Douglas was that blond lieutenant that I had seen Betty with on Fort Street. He said it sounded like him. I remarked that I thought I noticed the ribbon of the Distinguished Flying Cross, so evidently the guy hadn't spent all his time in port.

It was apparent though, that Smith was rapidly building up a prejudice against all aviators and aviation. Well, lots of such prejudices have been founded on something more nebulous than an aviator stealing your best girl friend. I saw there wasn't going to be much profit in kidding him, and he wasn't in a mood for sympathy. I wished something would happen to boost his morale, but I didn't know what to do about it. I never did know what happened but when the time came to shove off on patrol, he hadn't said anything more to me about a transfer.

After we left Midway, the captain announced that we had a patrol area in the western Carolines. There wasn't any cheering about that. The engineering officer asked if traffic wasn't a little thin down there these days, and the captain admitted that it was. We all of us thought that after the last deserted hole they'd sent us to, we deserved some spot like Luzon Straits, or the East China Sea. The captain said we would be sure to have some excitement this time, because we had a special mission he couldn't tell us about until later.

The first part of the patrol dragged

on with no more excitement than we had had the last one. Then finally we started moving in toward Muluak and that evening in the wardroom, the captain told us what we had to do. Task Force Fifty-eight was going to strike the western Carolines. That gave everybody a lift. The war was getting on. The submarines had sunk a lot of ships in the western Carolines, when that area was all their own, but it would be nice to see the big broom sweep the sea.

There was going to be a two-day carrier strike on Muluak. We would make our weather observations, and then in the morning at the appointed time we would stand by, near the island to rescue any of our pilots forced down at sea. You could see all of Muluak's installations from the sea, on that low flat island, and we would have a ringside seat for one of the greatest shows on earth. We were all pleased at the prospect, all except Smith. I heard him mutter something about, "Damned nursemaids for the bird men."

The next day, on schedule, we surfaced off the island. Right on schedule, in came the planes. It was a magnificent sight, magnificent for us. I don't know how the Japs felt about it. Bombs of all sizes rained down on Muluak air base. Our fighters dove down, down into the smoke, until you held your breath and prayed for them to come out of the dive. We almost forgot we weren't there just as spectators.

*"Lonesome Luke. Lonesome Luke. Work for you, twenty-one three five six,"* the TBS was calling.

That was us, Lonesome Luke. We started searching. Pretty soon we found a fighter zooming over a spot in the ocean, to direct us to the kid in the water. Before you could say Jack Robinson he had him aboard. It was simple, just plain simple. Life was just a bowl of cherries.

Then TBS started squawking again, *"Ronsomu Ruku. Ronsomu Ruku. Eighteen two five four."* It was so ludicrous we all started laughing. The Japs were trying to misdirect us. They were all prepared to do it. They knew the system. They knew what we were doing, and their elaborate preparations broke down because they couldn't say their *l's.* But the captain remarked that if they knew that much, we could expect trouble before the strike was over.

WE GOT a legitimate call. There was a fighter pilot down only a few miles away. We found him all right in his rubber boat. He told us that a Jap sea plane had straffed him while he was in the water. The runways on Muluak must have been unservicable from bomb damage, but if they had undamaged sea planes they could take off from the lagoon. Our pilot said it was a Rufe. After that we kept our eyes peeled for sea planes and of course we kept the forty-millimeter fully manned. Smith was on the bridge to direct the fire, and his pal Bryson was spotting for the after gun. We had to stay on the surface to do any good.

The next pick-up we made was in close to the beach. By that time Muluak had been pretty well worked over. Their anti-aircraft fire was sporadic. We came right on in until we were only three miles from the beach, and suddenly there arose two columns of spray between us and the shore. The Japs had opened up on us with a shore battery. We couldn't spot where they were shooting from, but it must have been an unfavorable angle for them, because we were well within range from the nearest shore, and all their shells were landing short. You could hear them scream as the ricochets went over.

The captain cleared the bridge and conning tower. We closed the lower conning tower hatch. The Old Man stayed up on the bridge alone. He figured that if we got hit topside, those of us below could dive and save the ship and leave him up there alone. I think Smith lost his doubts about the Old Man's aggressiveness. When we got our man aboard, we dove and got *Sailfin* away from there.

That made three, and somebody facetiously remarked we ought to get one more so the zoomies could have a fourth for bridge. It was hours later before our next call came. It was quieting down by then and I think the Japs had located our pilot in the water before we did. We started coming in. We had

a Hellcat overhead to lead the way and keep us company. It was his wingman in the water.

"There's a Jap plane, a Rufe," somebody shouted. He had started a run on us but the Hellcat was too quick for him. He dove down at the Jap, and Rufe broke off his approach and started reaching for the cloud bank, but it was too late. He trailed black smoke across the blue sky, then he dove down in flames and hit the water full speed, head on. There was only a slick to mark the spot of his demise. I guess too many of us were watching the show and probably that is what the Japs were counting on.

"Here comes another one, port quarter," the lookout warned.

The forty-millimeter opened up, both fore and aft. On the bridge we were practically under the muzzle of the forward gun. It stabbed the air with flame right over our heads. You couldn't hear yourself think. The Jap came right on in. Our fighter was still too far away to help us. I saw the splashes walk across the water and I knew that Rufe had all his guns opened up on us. Then I was lying flat on my face on the deck behind the periscope shears. I heard the sound of the slugs striking the superstructure. When I looked up again there was the Hellcat on Rufe's tail and it was all over but the shouting.

Not all over either, because we had three wounded men in the after gun's crew. We got them below as fast as possible. One of them was young Bryson. He was the hardest hit. We had our hands full for a few minutes. We came alongside our man in the rubber boat. The Hellcat waved goodbye and boy, were we sorry to see him go. We got our fourth wet bird aboard and then we submerged to reorganize and check up on things and change our position a little before the Japs ganged up on us. That was our last call that day.

Bryson was the only one seriously wounded. The other two were making out all right, and at first we weren't worried about Bryson. The pharmacist's mate patched him up, and gave him a plasma transfusion. He seemed to be comfortable enough when I talked to him. We all needed a little rest that night.

About two o'clock in the morning, the pharmacist's mate called me to tell me he was worried about Bryson. I got up to see. Bryson was flushed and feverish and he seemed to be delirious. I decided we had better call the captain. The pharmacist's mate said we ought to get Bryson to a doctor as soon as possible, but he knew as well as I did, that that could not be soon.

The captain thought it over for awhile and then he sent a dispatch to ComTask-For Fifty-eight to ask to have a destroyer rendezvous with us, after the strike tomorrow, so we could get our wounded into the hands of a doctor. In a couple of hours back came the admiral's answer, arranging for the rendezvous. He cautioned us that the carriers would be moving out as soon as all the planes were recovered and that we would have to rendezvous promptly. Of course we knew that this was no place for a surface ship alone, not yet awhile, and the destroyers couldn't afford to lay behind the carriers.

During the strike the next morning there wasn't much that Muluak could do except lie there and take it. There weren't any calls for our services. As soon as the last plane cleared out we sent a dispatch saying we were headed for the rendezvous at full speed. Bryson's condition hadn't changed much. It would be five hours before we could make the rendezvous.

ABOUT an hour after we had left Muluak a dispatch came through from ComTaskFor Fifty-eight, saying there was a pilot in a rubber boat at such and such a location. We plotted it, and it was right in close to Muluak. The Old Man had a tough choice to make. If *Sailfin* turned back to pick up the aviator it was probable we would never make the rendezvous with the destroyer. Bryson would have very little chance of survival. If we didn't turn back the downed pilot faced almost certain death by torture when the Japs finally picked him up. His chances weren't too good no matter what we did. The enemy was much closer to him than we were. The captain hesitated.

Then he wrote out a dispatch saying

he was turning back to pick up the pilot. Remembering our experieince of yesterday, he asked for an air cover. We threw the rudder over and *Sailfin* started back the way she had come. When we were still some distance from our destination, the Hellcats were overhead. We had two fighters for CAP and it was comfortable to have them up there, too.

As we came in our air cover sighted the pilot in the water. He was close in all right. The Jap radio started screaming, *"Ronsomu Ruku. Ronsomu Ruku,"* and we knew that they knew what was up. Morever, they weren't under air attack now and maybe they would have their wits about them.

It seems they did. I think they had been laying a trap for us, and for that reason they hadn't bothered the pilot in his little rubber boat. He was bait and he would entice us in there where they wanted us.

A Jap sea plane, another Rufe, started closing in on us, and one of the Hellcats moved out to intercept. Rufe changed his mind and seemed to have found business elsewhere, but the Hellcat was on his tail. It was probably the same old game they tried yesterday, because another Rufe was coming in on the other side. We felt good about having two fighters. We had spiked that game, at least we thought we had. But the Japs, too, had upped the ante. While these two dogfights were going on, in came another Rufe.

The Old Man saw him coming. We pulled the plug. Down went *Sailfin* and just in time. As we passed a hundred feet the bamb went off. It was close. We still had more than a mile to go. The captain came up cautiously and asked our Hellcats if it was safe to surface. They said they thought so. They had splashed two Rufes and the third one had gone other places.

We just got up on the surface and underway again when the third Jap approached again from out of nowhere. The Hellcats were on him right away but this Jap was determined he was going to get in to us. I guess he figured he might just as well be a Kamikaze. He released his bomb too soon. It went off a good hundred feet away. Rufe passed right over our after deck, trying to dive into us, both Hellcats riding his tail, the forty-millimeter pumping shells into him, and he was nothing but a roaring ball of flames. He crashed off the port quarter.

One of our fighters said he had to leave. That meant that probably the other one couldn't stick around much longer. We had only a half mile to go. It looked like we could make it sure. Then whammo! We saw a splash rise up out of the ocean and we heard the rumble of a heavy shell.

We were within range of that shore battery again.

The captain ordered everybody below but this time we were in too close for that maneuver. The next salvo was a near miss. He told me later it was so close he thought we had been hit forward. We could never make it on the surface without getting hit. We got *Sailfin* submerged just as the next salvo landed and it sounded like they hit the water right on top of us. That last half mile commenced to look longer than any other half mile on earth.

The Old Man decided to close in submerged, then surface and finish off the job before the Japs could find the range. We tried it. The Japs were wise to that one. They had the range to the rubber boat. The first salvo after we showed our conning tower was a straddle. Down we went again. It would serve no useful purpose to get *Sailfin* sunk, right then and there.

Only a few hundred yards to go. I didn't know what the captain would try next, only I knew he wouldn't give up, ever.

We approached submerged.

"If I can get him to grab hold of the periscope and get a line on it. I'll tow him and his rubber boat out of range," the captain explained to me.

Well, of course the aviator had been the center of a lot of attention, as well as the mean point of impact and several Jap salvoes. When he saw this one-eyed steel snout progressing silently toward him like a brontosaurus he must have thought it was a new menace. He paddled away from it as fast as he could go.

The Old Man yelled instructions at him, and gestured and made faces

through the periscope, but between him and his intended passenger there was the steel hull and twenty or thirty feet of water.

WE COULDN'T back down submerged, and we couldn't stop and hold our depth. When the periscope went by there wasn't anything to do but make the slow turn all around in a big circle and approach again aiming fifteen hundred tons of submarine at a dodging rubber boat. It took ten of time's longest minutes.

The second time around, he got the word. He grabbed hold of the periscope. We started towing him out to sea. All we needed then was time, too much time, because we couldn't tow fast.

The sea and the spray kept breaking over the fragile rubber boat and most of the time our hitchhiker was under water. He was half drowned but he hung on. We took turns watching him through the other periscope.

Once when Smith had the periscope he cried out, "I know that guy. That's Douglas, off the *Niagara*."

It didn't mean much to me. It didn't penetrate that this bird we were making all the effort for was Smith's rival for Betty Garner. Of course when you knew the guy, it made it more personal, but I don't know that that really changed anything.

We were getting along fine, and all the Jap shells were landing astern. We had about decided we could risk surfacing. I had the periscope. I saw this damned Rufe approaching. Then I saw the Hellcat chasing him. The Jap opened up on the rubber boat. I could see the path the bullet splashes made across the water, and all I could do was yell curses at him. Through the scope I saw the Hellcat splash the Jap. Only a few yards away from the periscope, the Rufe stood on its nose and burned like a torch. Did you ever see another human being die in flames while only a few yards away you cheered and applauded? Well, I did.

It took only a minute to realize that Douglas had been hit, and the boat was adrift again. We made the turn around to pick up the tow, but it was no use. Douglas was wounded and exhausted. It was no go. I think the captain had about made up his mind to surface anyway and take his chances with Jap planes and the shore battery.

Then he saw a shower approaching. It was coming in from seaward. It marched across the surface of the water in a straight line, a ruled line dividing rain from shine. In a few minutes we would be in it. We waited for it. It would give us a break and screen us from the shore for awhile. Close to the periscope, splashes from the teeming raindrops rose off the sterile sea, like dust from a plowed field.

We surfaced, and headed *Sailfin* in the direction we had last seen the boat. The rain beat down upon us in a sheet, a screen, a perfect concealment. Too perfect. We couldn't see Douglas and his boat. We felt our way along. Our Hellcat told us he was leaving. He had already overstayed his time. We wished him luck.

Smith was down on deck with a couple of men, waiting to help Douglas aboard and get him below On deck, they were the first to see him. They yelled, "There he is, Captain, on the starboard beam, out about a hundred yards."

We stopped. We yelled to Douglas and begged him to paddle in these last few yards. He was too far gone. Even for his life he couldn't paddle that rubber boat upwind. The boat was drifting farther away. These tropical showers blow over as fast as they come up. We might have only a minute to decide.

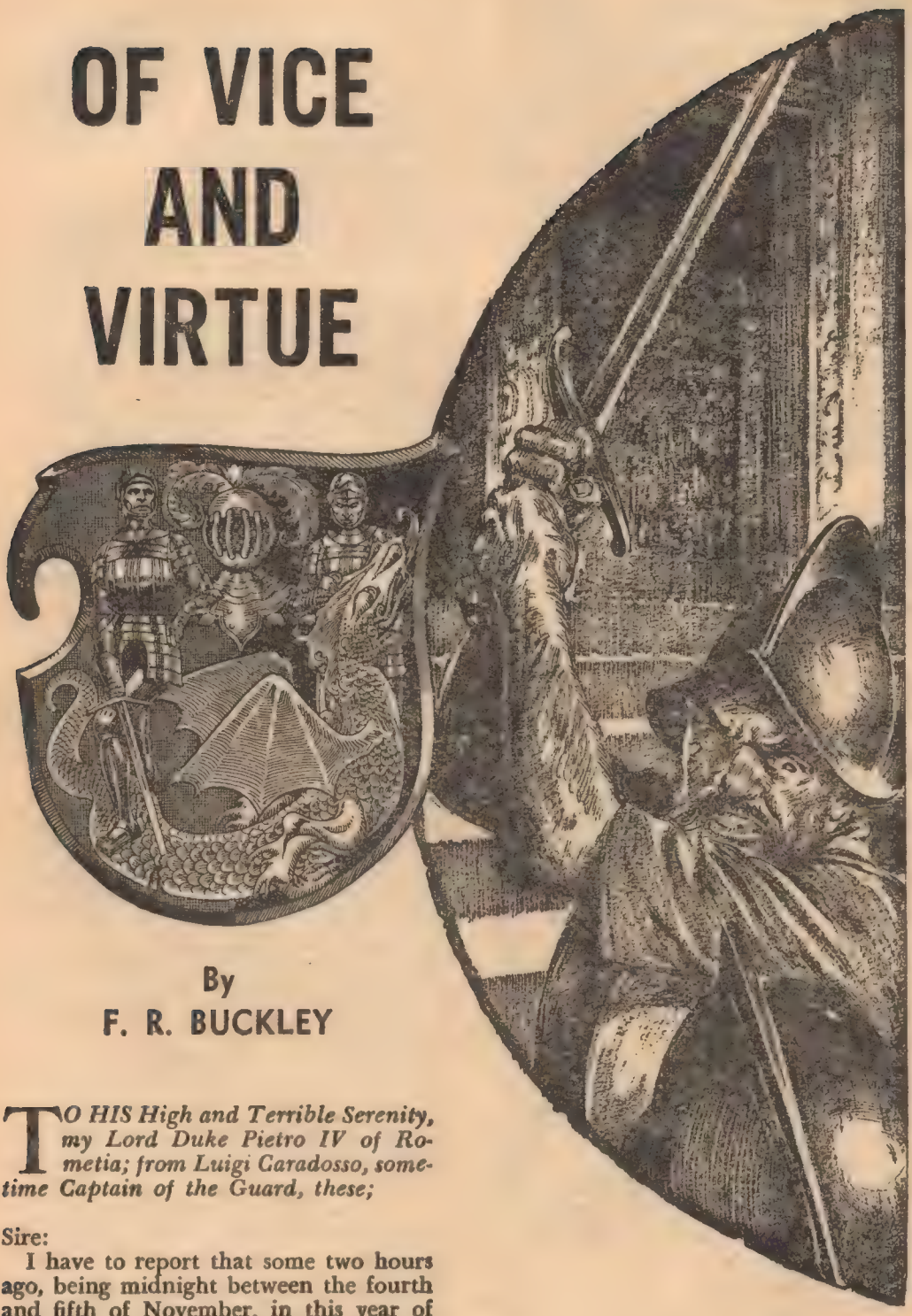
Smith yelled up to the bridge, "Captain, I'll swim out to him," and I could see that he was busy stripping, getting ready to go into the water.

The captain answered, "No, Smith, no. I don't want two of you in the water if I have to dive."

But there we were. We couldn't make a circle and come around again. We would lose sight of the boat, and maybe while we were maneuvering, the shower would pass. Were you ever in a parking lot, jammed in, and wished you could move sideways? Multiply that wish by a million, and throw in a couple of lives at stake and you'll know how we felt.

*(Continued on page 146)*

# OF VICE AND VIRTUE



By
F. R. BUCKLEY

*TO HIS High and Terrible Serenity, my Lord Duke Pietro IV of Rometia; from Luigi Caradosso, sometime Captain of the Guard, these;*

Sire:

I have to report that some two hours ago, being midnight between the fourth and fifth of November, in this year of our salvation, one thousand five hun-

ILLUSTRATED BY
L. STERNE STEVENS

*As I drew clear to outflank Renato, a ball knocked the casque off my head.*

dred and eighty-one and the weather very rainy, Your Grace's humble undersigned servant (who at the age of fourscore and one sleeps very lightly) was aroused from dozing by sounds as of a cat at the front door of this his cottage.

Trusting the above will satisfy Your Grace's new whim that I write as though still in the active service of Your Eminence, I now state in the first person that I share not the common prejudice against cats, one (a tabby) having once formed the only meal I had had in six days; wherefore I arose in my shirt and went to see how I might benefit this animal.

Judge of my disappointment when I found (the wind meantime disturbing both my shirt and my rheumatism) that the scratching had proceeded from no cat at all, but merely from one of Your Grace's female subjects, by name Marie Ubaldo, aged sixty-one, an inhabitant of the village of Pieve. The reason for her having come xij miles through the storm afoot, and for lying whimpering on my doorstep while clawing the door with her nails, was that her only son, having attempted the life of Your Grace, is to be put to death by torture in the square of Rometia three days hence.

I have pointed out to this female that those who poke at Dukes with poniards, whether on account of the salt tax or merely for fun, must expect to pay somewhat heavily for their amusement. I have further protested that it is now ten years since I retired from the service of Your Grace, and that when I was in it my concern was rather to discourage assassins than to plead for them. But to all reasoning the old lady replies only that she is a widow, that this is her sole son, and that I can save him if I will.

To which, the hour and weather being what they are, I have so far found no retort save to fill her with mulled wine and give her my bed. Which (our united ages totalling one hundred and forty-two years) leaves me no option but to sit in this kitchen and write this letter.

EVIDENTLY it is not to be expected that after years spent exhorting Your Lordship to a sterner discipline of the population, I should now counsel clemency in this case—the only one in which Your Highness has been pleased to act like your grandfather, Pietro II, whom may God carefully accept, amen! Nor have I any intention of counselling anything at all; wherefore Your Grace may relax his eyebrows and read on at his ease. The bulk of this dispatch depends simply on the fact that I have nothing to do until it shall be time to feed the chickens, and that meditation on the extraordinary mercifulness of Your Highness up to this time has led me by contrast to think of Renato Ziboni, sometime Tyrant of Crissale.

He is long since dead, as I shall show, and his castle pulled down and his domains incorporated in Your Grace's duchy; but in the first days of my commanding Your Highness' grandfather's guard this Renato was a power to be reckoned with. He was situated on what was at that time our eastern border; and while Rometia had seized all the petty counties to the west of it, he had overcome all the weak nobles to the west of him. Which naturally left himself and Your Grace's grandfather face to face, with the question between them whether Pietro II or Renato I should rule the whole countryside.

Of course, Pietro II had me for captain, though at the time I now describe I had been in office only a week; but even so the question remained. Because while my presence gave your actual army an advantage, there are in war also spiritual quantities to be reckoned with, which must come from the princes involved.

And while Your Grace's grandfather was in this regard as well equipped as any people could be without actually growing horns and a tail, this Renato so far surpassed him in treachery, cruelty, greed and other qualities essential to a ruler, as to have started among the peasants a legend that he really was the Devil.

He had ascended to the county by murdering his father; he had affirmed his title by having his brother fall out of a window; he had added to his lands by a second marriage after his first wife had died from eating of a salad; and once when faced with excommunication, he had flung a bishop into a dungeon and threatened to hang him naked in

the Piazza, head down. Knowing that the populace might protest against this, he had furthermore caused cannon to be mounted secretly on the roof of the Bargello and when the folk had assembled to hear the explanation he had promised them, he had had these guns, all loaded with scrap iron, fired into the midst of them instead.

Sometimes, on his progresses through his domains, Pietro II would order felons released and would scatter sweetmeats among the children. Renato, at the Council of Nobles, had condemned both these practices; saying he'd trained his people to be grateful that he let them live, and that anyone who pampered peasants out of that attitude was a traitor to his class.

It was just after this rebuke that Pietro II sent for me; to report at evening guard-change to his cabinet in the White Tower. The table before him, I found, was littered with stripped pen-quills and the feathers he had chewed off them and spat out—a bad sign. And from under his eyebrows, which were bushy, his two eyes burned at me like a couple of fires in a cave.

"Y'heard what my lord Renato said at the meeting," he began; to which I replied by saluting smartly. "Well, idiot; What d'ye think of it?"

I was not, at all events, idiot enough to answer him when he was in that mood; so I saluted again.

"Is't not evident," says His Grace, "from his daring to speak to me thus, that 'a's been arming and thinks himself about ready to try conclusions?"

"It might be so," I ventured.

"*Might* be so—*might* be so?" roars my lord. "What do I pay thee for, yokel? Is it so, or is it not? What do thy spies report? Or perchance hast thou none in Crissale?"

As if I could have set up a spy system in a week!

"It seems, Sire, that the captain before me," says I, "—that the captain *before me*—had some agents in that county, but—"

"Well! What do they tell *thee?*"

"I would have spoken of the matter earlier, but Your Grace was occupied. It seems that when the sentries opened the main gate this morning, they found fastened thereto a bag, sire, containing the head of a gentleman with a white beard. I had not the pleasure of knowing him, but my lieutenant said he was formerly employed as our principal agent in Crissale."

Pietro leaned back in his chair and stared like a basilisk. Certainly the decapitation was not my fault; nor the engagement of such a conspicuous old goat in the first place; but since nobles must always be in the right, where could I be but in the wrong?

"My main fear, Sire—" says I to break the silence; meaning to add that belike Old Whiskers had been tortured before his shortening, and had betrayed our other agents. But Pietro saved me the trouble. In a low voice, and without moving from his slouch in his chair, he told me what had become of my sources of information—mine, who had been in Rometia only a week—what effect their disappearance might be expected to have on his plans, and just what sort of fool he considered me.

Finally, bolting upright, banging the table with his fist and roaring like a lion, he demanded, "And what are thou to do about it?"

That was no question to be answered in a moment. I had got only so far with it as to lick my lips when Pietro beat the table again and bellowed, "There's no time for more fumbling. Thou'rt to go to Crissale thyself and find out what's toward. Now! Forthwith! Dismissed!"

## II

HAVING been brought up in an age of Captains' Guilds, which prevent poor senior officers from being too grievously oppressed or killed in unreasonable numbers, Your Grace will doubtless assume the above order to have been symbolic—like the painting of Pietro II which now hangs in the Great Hall and shows him white-robed with wings growing out of his shoulders and the dove of peace perched on the top of his head.

Nowadays indeed (and largely due to my effort in the past) a captain *is* a captain, and various subalterns on his behalf manage spies, supervise armaments, command artillery and so on. But at the

time of which I write the only officer able to do anything (except take orders, and those of the simplest) was apt to be the captain himself. It took me six months, at Rometia, to find and train a lieutenant capable of managing a hanging in a way that should be creditable to the realm; so that Your Grace may see that when Pietro ordered me to go to Crissale, he could mean no other than that I should risk my own flesh and blood.

Which accordingly I did; arriving in that city about ten o'clock of the next morning, which was Sunday, disguised as a shepherd or similar rustic person from the hills above the town.

In which character, and following the lead of numerous genuine yokels, I strolled from the Porta San Giovanni toward the principal square of the town, keeping my eyes about me, thanking God I was unknown in the district and speculating as to the cause of a bellowing noise in the distance.

My observations were not reassuring. First of all, at the very gate by which I entered, there were scratches on the inner face of the wall which meant that extra guns had been parbuckled up to the ramparts—new guns, evidently, because had they been cannon moved from other emplacements it would have been easier to transport them along the top of the wall. That was bad; and then I noticed that the chains which in those days were used to prevent cavalry charges down wide streets, had all been renewed and their posts strengthened. This meant that Renato was sure of his own people —sometimes tyrants are not—and deplorably ready for strangers. Then again, the town was far fuller of soldiers than I liked to see it, and the said soldiers had about them an air which I liked still less —the air of men who see war so close ahead of them that they may already act like conquerors of their own civilians. Seeing one drunken sergeant push a burgess off the pavement and kiss his wife, I estimated the probable duration of peace at not more than a month.

Now as to the bellowing noise.

It came, I found, from the great square itself, and its source was a friar—little and fat like one of our artillery mortars and with an equal capacity for noise. The hour was just after mass; the square was packed with soldiers and citizens who were listening open-mouthed to this culverin mounted on a barrel—evidently he was not one of the regular clergy, or he would have been using the pulpit outside the cathedral—and when I heard the tenor of his discourse, my mouth opened likewise. Also my heart rose; for it seemed that by a miracle this preacher had been sent to save me trouble.

"And these levies our lord is raising," roars the friar—yet was he making no effort, but speaking more in sorrow than in anger. "Ye know it not, ye city folk, but my lord's officers are scouring the countryside, taking men from ploughtails to put them behind guns. Wherefore is your bread scarcer and more costly and there is worse to come. How many of ye have been forced to take soldiers into your households, here within the city, to the peril of your women-folk and the scandal of religion? Why are all these men here, if not for war? Why have eighteen several new guns been mounted on the walls this past week? Why hath his lordship made perquisition into each family's store of food, and ordained a new census of able-bodied men? War is upon ye, my brethren and sistren, and in your hearts ye know it; but having eyes and seeing, yet ye will not see; ye stand there like sheep for the slaughterer—"

He went on, passing from useful fact to useless exhortation—yet dropping still, from time to time, words useful to me in my quest for truth; while I wondered if all I'd heard of Renato were mere flattery, that this friar could so talk without arrest.

I had not, however, long to wonder; for just as the friar threw back his sleeves and asked the question, "Well, then, my friends—what is it I would have you do?" —a file of guardsmen clove through the crowd at the double, dragged him down off his barrel and carried him away.

A citizen at my elbow crossed himself.

"That's the end of Fra Matteo," says he.

"A newcomer hereabouts, is he?" I asked in my best country jargon.

"Thee *must* be a rustic, not to know Fra Matteo," says the citizen scornfully. "Nay, he's the best friend of the poor and sick in the county; a fine preacher too, could charm a bird out of a tree, but

*Turning slowly, as a yokel might when mistaken for someone else, I found myself pricked in the belly with a sword-point.*

what's maddened him to speak as he did today, I know not. But he was a good man and I'll wait and see the last of him. He'll be hanging out o' one o' them windows in five minutes."

He meant the windows of the Bargello; toward which most of the friar's late audience had turned their heads. Out of sociability, I waited the five minutes and then, reflecting that justice is famed for its delays, another five—but still no friar appeared at the end of a rope and I turned to go.

"My lord Renato must ha' turned merciful," says I to the citizen.

"That's a foul lie!" says he indignant-

ly; jealous (men are so constituted) for the fame of his tyrant, albeit an ill-fame, for no other reason than that the tyrant was his. "As often as not my lord amuses himself torturing such fellows—"

"But surely not," says I, in my character of innocent rustic, "surely not holy friars?"

Alas, the horror I had assumed was destined to become real, and that eftsoons.

For from behind me: "Indeed yes," says a voice. "And sometimes captains too, Captain Luigi Caradosso."

TURNING slowly, as a yokel might when mistaken for someone else, I found myself pricked in the belly with a sword-point.

At least, I should have been so pricked, had I not chanced to be wearing under my peasant's robe a little corselet of Milanese mail. Not wishing, for modesty and other reasons, to be searched at that moment, I winced from the sword point as though it had really hurt me, but on the larger issue of who I was, I at once perceived that frankness and candor were now the only wear. I have always preferred them, and anyhow the man who was holding the sword to my gizzard had reason to know me beyond any deception.

He had once served under me in the free-lances—a sergeant he was then—and for disciplinary reasons I had had to break his jaw. Now, evidently, by his bands of fur, he was lieutenant in the guard of Count Renato; and evidently also he was so far from gratitude for my training him for this promotion, as to be yearning for the chance to run me through.

Behind him, the crowd giving them a wide berth, he had half-a-dozen men at arms—fellows, methought, he had summoned on the spur of the moment when by evil chance he had recognized me. But his next words showed that this was not the case; and that the smallness of their numbers—six lousy men to arrest Luigi Caradosso!—was a deliberate insult.

I will be charitable to the dead and suppose that he had been deluded by my attire; for if clothes make the man, how much more doth armor! And arms and armor obviously (to him) I had none.

"You deceive yourself, master," says I —truthfully, but not meaning what he thought I meant. So far was he in fact deceived that he now burst out laughing. Nasty yellow teeth he had.

"Ah, nay," says he. "Say not that, Captain. Belittle not thine ugliness by supposing anyone could ever forget it. Besides, we've been expecting thee—ever since we sent thee the head of old Signor Borgo—I said that'd draw thee, and I was right. Thou'st been followed all the way from Rometia hither: I've overlooked thy spying in the town like a mother overlooking her babe—and now thou sayest I'm mistaken in thee. Fie, fie, thou ape."

Of course what I had meant was that he deceived himself as to my defencelessness; which he should not have done, knowing me. But fools do not profit by experience, and then again that wince and gasp I had given when he prodded me had been well mummed, if I may say so.

Actually, as he should have surmised, I was pretty well protected, for a sheep-herder. The shapeless hat I wore, for instance—and which had been taken from a genuine peasant we had hanged—had a steel skull-cap under it. Then again, the upturned neck of my robe hid a *collaretto di Caradosso*— a steel neckpiece designed to guard against my own cut at the ear-veins; and in addition to the chain mail I have mentioned, I was wearing a pair of light greaves. From the knees down I was bare of armor; having always held that it limits leaping, and that a man not nimble enough to keep his calves out of the way had better die.

Being in Crissale on (as I had thought) a peaceful mission, and it the Sabbath too, I was not armed for offense. Simply, up my right sleeve I had a pistolet charged with a dozen small balls and held to my arms with loops; up my left sleeve, similarly secured, a double-edged knife; and that was all—except of course for the sword with a flat cross hilt, which was so slung down my back that I could reach it over my shoulder.

"Better choose *thy* window now, Luigi," says the lieutenant, grinning unpleasantly and glancing up at the Bargello. "There's a better view down—"

*Had he been magnanimous, that lieutenant might have lived to a ripe old age; as it was, behold him suddenly without a head.*

Ah, he should not have permitted himself that mockery, poor soul, or at any rate, that glance. Hate is a pleasant enough emotion, but it has no place in war; and it was war, albeit on a small scale, that he had on hand in that moment.

Because as the lieutenant's eyes left me, my pistolet left its nest in my sleeve; my captor poked instinctively at my belly, but it was unreceptive and he had squandered that fraction of a second necessary for withdrawal and a cut at my head. Not that that would have benefited him either, but—can Your Grace wonder that to all such of my sons as I have met, I have been unwearied in preaching against uncharitable emotions? Had he been magnanimous, that lieutenant might have lived to a ripe old age and died amid the acclamations of his grandchildren; as it was, behold him suddenly without a head and his assistants wiping blood and brains out of their eyes with one hand while desperately trying to draw sword with the other!

Four of them were, that is, because some of those dozen bullets, ricochetting doubtless off the lieutenant's skull ere it smashed, had smitten two of the men at arms so that one fell immediately, while the other began running in small circles, shrieking and bumping into the men still on duty.

I have always had a great sympathy with common soldiers, provided they were not under my own command; it was evident that these men were in trouble, and most willingly would I have left them to the chance of being hanged for my escape. I was indeed skirting them with intent to run for the nearest city gate when they got their eyes clear and most ungratefully fell upon me—all four of them, mark you, and yelling still at the tops of their voices for aid from their comrades in the square! There is no place in honest soldering for such rascals; and, cracking the skull of one with my pistol-barrel and stabbing another in the neck with my little knife, I rid the profession of two of them anyhow. The other twain hesitated, which they should not have done; because their dawdling gave me a chance to reach my sword, and thereafter—

WELL, Your Grace, I have been slightly put off the thread of my narrative by this Maria Ubaldo coming out of my bedroom wrapped in a blanket, weeping and crying and saying (it is now four o'clock in the morning) that she hath had a dream in which her son was still a baby and having his flesh torn off in strips with red-hot pincers, according to Your Highness' sentence. She hath been asking me, between blubbers, why Your Grace's mercy should fail for her boy, when it hath saved so many others. And rather than explain that everything must have a beginning—good or bad—I

have put her back to bed with another pint of hot wine in her crop.

But she is still sobbing. Obstinate hags, these mothers.

Where was I?

Ah—fighting the Crissalian army in the great square. Not the *whole* army, of course—I would not have Your Highness think me a boaster; and that they had no cavalry or artillery in action against me, I readily admit. Also that some of the infantry there present were simple Sunday strollers without swords; yet were there enough of them armed, and enough others ready—without going into the rights and wrongs of the case—to uproot cobble stones and throw them, to make my departure from their city quite a spirited affair.

Indeed, had they been less awkward swordsmen or fewer (so that they had not got in each others' way) I might have sustained some serious injury, to the ruin of Rometia and the prejudice of Italy at large. As it was, they hewed away my peasant's robe without more of my person than the upper joints of two fingers, half of my left ear, a piece of my beard (I killed the man who shaved me—I killed fifteen or twenty others, probably, but I made sure of him—and then they shrank from me until I had a straight run out of the square.

That the road I took led to a gate much nearer than that by which I had entered the city; that the guard, instead of being alert for trouble, should have been gaping in the direction of the tocsin-bell; that, having run past them, I should encounter outside the gate a peasant with a fairly good horse in a cart—these circumstances I can attribute only to the favor of Heaven, which hath a soft spot for orphans.

I cut the traces with my sword, rode the horse bareback to the border, where a squadron of our cavalry awaited me; and went forwith to show Pietro in what wise Crissale had received his envoy.

"H'm," says he, beginning to chew a pen.

I had expected that. Having absorbed—as he thought—all the information I had gained, he was now—I could see—considering whether to declare war or gain time by hanging me for exceeding my instructions. Our forces and Crissale's were near enough equal to make him ponder—not, of course, my rights or wrongs, but his own advantage in the matter.

However, he was not the first noble I had served. So I waited until his face showed a crisis of indecision, and then threw in the news I'd kept back.

"All this, Your Grace," says I indignantly, "when their whole army is in city quarters, while ours is ready to march; and while they're still in the midst of the business of raising levies in the country!"

"*Levies?*"

"Yes, Sire. The officers are about it even now—I heard it from a holy friar whom Renato then hanged for letting slip the news."

"These levies are not yet raised?" asks Pietro, throwing down the pen.

"No, Sire. But soon."

"And we are ready to march?"

"Yes, Sire."

He rose from his chair, suddenly almost too furious to speak.

"It is too much!" he shouted. "Maltreat my captain *and* hang a holy friar! The man's a menace to church and state! We are at war with Crissale! Act accordingly! Dismissed!"

## III

UNDOUBTEDLY for similar holy reasons—for what noble ever admitted that he was a greedy thief?—Renato di Crissale had, we found, similarly considered himself at war with us.

Treacherously ignoring the decent custom of declaring the said war, he had scrabbled together a column from among the troops billeted in the city and launched it with the intent to hold the pass leading from our territory into his. And but for the fact that we'd abandoned the outworn formalities of heralds and defiances and so on, and crossed the pass before his troops could reach it, some very inconvenient fighting might have ensued—we climbing damned nasty slippery slopes and they rolling damned nasty great heavy rocks down on us.

As it was, a sharp skirmish almost under the walls of Crissale drove Renato's column back into the city, and the

war settled into what should have been a comfortable little siege.

I was a young man then, full of new ideas about everything military, from strategy to the best method of burnishing armor; and such of these ideas as pertained to siege-craft I desired to try upon Crissale. It was, as I had heard, and indeed as I had seen for myself, an extremely strong place, not to be reduced by the old methods of battery and mining, under six months. By which time —and a good deal earlier—Renato's country levies might be in shape to fall upon us from the rear.

I therefore thought it meet to direct my attack not against the walls so much as against the inhabitants; and not so much on the bodies of the said inhabitants as upon their spirits. Because while walls have no feelings, and bodies can die but once, spirits can be made to suffer indefinitely—until indeed, they may cause bodies to revolt *within* the walls; thus easing enormously the task of the forces without.

I trust I make myself clear to Your Grace; though I suppose it will be hundreds of years before the world comes to appreciate my ideas. I may illustrate my meaning with the example that, for instance, instead of catapulting dead horses and the like into Crissale to cause disease, I enticed the besieged into making a sortie and then sent their casualties back to them by catapult. This system avoided the great objection to horse-throwing—namely that the besieged could eat the animals (unless these were so rotten as to have been dangerous in the camp of the besiegers)—but its great advantage was its effect on the minds of the inhabitants. To hear that one's friend or husband hath been killed is one thing; to see him come flying through the air to crunch at one's feet is another. And of course there'd be no means of knowing whether he'd been dead or living when he set out.

When at last Renato grew wary of sorties—which wariness I took as confirmation of my ideas—I launched another little novelty. Instead of keeping my guns in one place, I moved them continually, so that the battlement-patrols could not know at which points it was safe to stand upright and had to crouch continually on their rounds. Also, the citizens, one day safe in streets at right-angles to the line of fire, could never know but that the next day would find cannon-balls skipping down their alley.

And when Renato replied to this pleasantry with concentrations of mobile wall-guns (at a prodigious cost in man-power and powder, because my guns were dissimulated in bushes) I abandoned bombardment and loosed upon the city my visiting parties, as I called them.

These were small bands of old soldiers who, before seeking saftey in our army, had been bravi, or highway robbers, or the like of that. Ordinarily such fellows are the despair of captains, being unable to see the use of drill against an enemy, and much inclined to poison their own officers or stab them in the back.

But I had found a use for them, very much to their taste. They were to climb subtly over the walls, separately, as they had once climbed into burgess' windows; cutting any throats they encountered and possessing themselves, for their own behoof, of any portable property. They were dressed in black, the less to be seen, and their faces and hands were also sooted; and after their first few forays they abandoned the knife in favor of a strangling-cord. This was one of my greatest inspirations. Citizens found with their throats cut might be considered victims of private vengeance. An epidemic of burghers dead, seemingly, of apoplexy, betokened the wrath of Heaven. Especially if the deceased—as happened a couple of times—had been seen in the actual embrace of a devil.

It was a great disappointment to me when Renato captured a whole band of these honest fellows and in defiance of all humanity hanged them naked by one ankle each from the city wall. Even after I had had my arquebusiers put them out of their misery, they were a sad sight, hanging there with their white bodies and black extremities—and very discouraging to their comrades.

However, it turned out they had not died in vain. Is not Your Grace presently lord of Crissale?

Very well, then.

I was in my tent, the very evening after their accident, wondering whether I'd

been wise to excuse the other visitors from duty that night, when the sentry announced that a friar wished to see me. A frair? says I. And yes, a little fat one, says he.

"Solid flesh?" I asked; because, as Your Grace will remember, the monk Renato was to have hanged three weeks before had been little and fat, and I was in no mood for truck with bogies.

"Very solid, sir," says the sentry; so I told them to search the man and bring him in. The noise of his protests—he said they tickled him—was enough to convince me 'twas the same man.

"HOW is't thou'rt not hanged?" I asked when he entered.

He seated himself and smiled at me very child-like. Robe and cincture and all, he looked like an overgrown baby.

"I reasoned with my lord," says he.

"Reasoned with Renato?" says I; but not as incredulously as Your Grace might think. There was something about the little man—

"Why not? He is one of God's creatures," says Fra Matteo. "The founder of our order reasoned with wild beasts. Then we read that on the island of Melita, the Apostle Paul—"

"What was the substance of thy reasoning?" I asked; because while it was most unlikely I should be taken prisoner by Renato, one never knows.

"Why, I submitted myself to his lordship's judgment," says Fra Matteo, "asking merely that if he decided to hang me, he should postpone execution two or three days, until I could put my sick in other hands."

"Sending a guard around with thee, to all the stinking hovels in the county?" I asked.

Fra Matteo opened his eyes.

"How strange! His lordship used almost those very words. But I explained to him there'd be no need for that—besides, if I may say so without offending you, Captain, soldiers alarm the sick, especially women, and—"

"You'd walk back, then, of your own free will, and be stretched?" Matteo made no protestations; he nodded. And I believed him.

"And my lord's reply?"

"Well," says the friar, crossing himself, "I'm sorry to say he spared my life because (in his words) did he send me to Heaven the Holy Innocents would disgrace themselves stealing the teeth out of my mouth. I rebuked him for blaspheming, and he promised to amend."

I gagged at him

"And art thou now come to reason with *me?*" I demanded.

He smiled.

"By order of my lord Renato?"

He stopped smiling.

"God forbid I should twice put temptation in his way," he said gravely—as though calling my lord a blasphemer had been no temptation at all! "No, I am come without his knowledge, Captain."

"By what route?" says I, ready to hang him myself if he pretended to have lowered that belly over the city wall.

"I came out of a gate, Captain," says he, folding his hands on his paunch. "The sergeant in charge thereof is the husband of one of the women, and—"

"One of which women?"

"One of the women my lord Renato is to let out of the city," says Fra Matteo patiently. "He is also the father of two of the children—the sergeant, I mean—and naturally anxious, as I am, that they shall not be caught between the two armies and starved to death, as happened at Siena. Wherefore—"

"Let me understand thee," says I, concealing a certain excitement. "Renato hath spared thy life. Now at thy behest he is to spare the women and children the rigors of the siege?"

The friar nodded and beamed at me.

"Hath he gone mad?"

Matteo heaved a sigh.

"So asks everyone," says he sadly. "I prefer to think he beginneth to see the light of reason."

"At the same time ridding himself of useless mouths," says I.

"Alack, 'twas in that fashion I had to put the matter to him," says Matteo reluctantly; then, cheering up. "But I could not have done so, Captain, had he not first spared *my* life; for which even thou canst find no explanation, Captain, save that he was compassionate and merciful."

"Having theretofore murdered most of

his family; and no later than today," says I, "butchered a dozen of my men."

Fra Matteo coughed.

"Were they not . . . But thyself, Captain," says he, restraining himself from asking what my men had been doing when caught, "hast done some hard things heretofore, and doubtless wilt again. But to let these poor women and children through thy lines will be a good—"

" 'Twill not be the first good deed of *my* life," says I angrily.

Matteo considered me, nodding.

"Then how much better off art thou than my lord Renato," says he. "For verily, since he'll profit by dismissing the useless mouths, I think his mercy to me is the only benefaction of his life. . . Then the women and children will have safe conduct?"

"Am *I* a wild beast?" I demanded; and in the goodness of my heart—and for other reasons—myself conducted him back through our pickets to within a bowshot of Crissale walls.

The gate by which he was to enter was the same by which I had latterly made my escape.

"Is that also the gate by which the women and children will come forth?" I asked.

"Yes," says he. "Tomorrow night, four hours after sunset."

"I will give orders accordingly," says I; and he blessed me and was gone.

## IV

NOW, having always been an honorable man insofar as was consistent with my duties—for the nature of which duties Your Serenity's family hath been responsible—I would not have Your Grace think I took that blessing under false pretenses.

No, I gave warning that any man who laid finger on even the prettiest of the women would thereafter find himself uninterested in such matters; and in fact the women and children did pass through our lines unharmed. I even went further and at a reasonable distance established a sort of camp for them—but Your Grace may judge of my ferocity toward weaklings by my behavior to this Maria Ubaldo; snoring in my bed while I cramp and freeze my hands writing all this.

However, the above matters attended to, it was my manifest duty to serve Pietro II by giving other orders; and a result of which, three and one half hours after sunset of the following day, fifty of my best cutthroats, well blackened, found themselves flat against the Crissale walls, twenty-five on each side of the gate by which the women and children would emerge.

They were a happy band of ruffians; glad of the chance to avenge their comrades (and get more loot) without climbing the walls, which is always the most dangerous part of such operations as theirs; and naturally gladder still that I myself was with them. I was not blackened, because to a commander his dignity is equally precious as his life—on the contrary, I wore my best half-armor and a casque with a large red plume in it. In the event of victory (and it was to be victory or death that night) this panoply might, methought, chase from Crissalian minds the memory of my last ragged appearance among them; in the other case, I naturally wished to make as handsome a corpse as possible.

It was pitch dark—no moon, no stars, and the besieged were late with their gate-opening. I remember that after a half-hour of extra waiting one of my bravos—and the most desperate of them, too, strangely enough—began to laugh at the top of his voice, and I had to stab him; I have often thought that was very queer.

But at last, from within, we heard a confusion of voices; the portcullis creaked up; a man came out of the postern and looked and listened for some time—he was so close I could actually smell him!—and reported in a low voice that the coast was clear. And then the main gate opened and out came the women and children. Inside the town, the street torches thereabouts had been doused lest the glow through the gate be perceived by our sentries; it was so dark we could not see a living soul; all we heard, for what seemed like hours but was of course far less, was the rustle of skirts, the pad of feet and the cry of some

frightened child, soon gagged by its mother's hand.

The swishing and the padding stopped; a man's voice in the gate said "Is that all?" and another's replied "Aye"; I blew my whistle and the whole fifty-one of us poured in through the gate.

Ah, Your Highness, when I look back on that night I marvel (meantime sweating cold drops) at the audacity of my youth. Perhaps I had in those days a guardian angel (who hath since got tired of me)—I know of none other explanation of my guesswork, all of which proved correct.

The first guess was reasonable—that the women to be sent forth would have been first mustered in the main square. But consider the wildness of the second.

It was that, being unaccustomed to kindliness (even such kindness as should profit himself) my lord Renato, probably accompanied by his principal officers, would be in the square to see the poor creatures depart. Also, that he would stay there, talking over his virtues, for at least as long as it would take us to reach him.

Had he not been there, and so available for a quick killing, 'twould have been death for us all, and a serious blot on my military memory. We should have been fifty against two or three thousand; for of course there was no hope of succor from our forces—that narrow gate, the women and children in front of it, and the wall gunners ready to fire at any suspicious noise!

But as we burst into the square, dazzled by the light of the torches and breaking our long silence with demoniac yells, I perceived that Renato was there indeed—in half-armor like myself, as if he had just returned from a tour of the walls; and surrounded, in fact, by a number of officers.

As I had expected, there was also a half-company of infantry, that had been used for the marshalling of the exiles. By arrangement, the most of my men rushed these rascals while I, with two of my most desperate sergeants, hurled ourselves on the officers.

It was their dutiful idea to close around his lordship; but, having doubtless survived previous attempts at assassination, he knew better than that. Had they closed around him, interfering with each other and with his lordship's use of his sword, we could have dealt with them all in two minutes; but the moment my lord yelled "Every man for himself!" I knew we should have trouble.

THERE was some little confusion at first, but the fight finally settled itself as two officers to each of my sergeants, and the remaining two (and his lordship himself) against me. And very warm work I had of it for some time—not that I could not have spitted either officer at will, but because my lord held himself out of the fray, waiting until my point should stick in a rib-cage or suchlike and give him a chance to spike me. When armed with sword and dagger, as I then was, I have never made bones about fighting two men at a time; but three, in the absence of a third arm, I have always found inconvenient.

I had moreover to consider the chance that one of my sergeants might fall, releasing two more assailants at my back—or some infantry rogue might break through the body of my men and mix in what did not concern him. In view of which possibilities it behooved me to hurry, even at the expense of sound tactics; and here again an angel voice seemed to advise me. I have sometimes thought this guardian might be my mother—it is true that in this world she left me on a monastery's steps in a basket, but she may since have changed her mind. At all events, I seemed to hear a sweet voice asking me why (since I did not dare get my blade stuck in bones) I should not have a try at my enemies' eyes? Devout as ever, I followed the suggestion forthwith—a *rinverso tondo* (which as Your Grace doth not know, alas! is a cross-sweep, back-hand, with the knuckles up) blinded one of my adversaries and thereafter—since a glance showed me my sergeants were doing well—I considered victory achieved.

Which conceit almost cost me my life. Because at this moment one of the sergeants screamed and dropped his sword—he dropped his hand with it, shorn off at the wrist; and with no more delay than it

took to finish him, this sergeant's antagonist was behind me: aiming, for his first contribution, a murderous thrust at my kidneys. Ah, that little coat of chain-mail which—defying those who call me womanish—I have always worn, even under plate-armor! In that moment it saved me from death behind; and the next moment, when his lordship drove a thrust at my sword-arm shoulder, it saved me in front. And then I turned and with a lucky cut avenged the sergeant; turned back and with an extremely skilled parade, passado and attack by circle ran his lordship's other defender through the Adam's apple; and so found myself free to deal with Renato himself.

It was at this moment that I realized they were ringing that damned tocsin-bell again; which meant that in a few minutes we should be overwhelmed. There was only one way out of the peril—that within the next few minutes Pietro II should be unmistakably proclaimed Lord of Crissale in succession to Renato; wherefore I flung myself on the said Renato with new desperation.

I should have said that during the earlier fighting, we had approached the wide steps in front of the cathedral; and Renato, doubtless remembering some tale of the advantage of higher ground, now retreated up four or five of these steps. But alas! *his* angel guardian—perhaps his murdered wife—had failed to tell him that such advantage applies only on *narrow* stairs—not wide, on which one's adversary can rush around, forcing one to turn on uneven footing, and taking the upper place himself!

I must say that even so, and by no merit of his own, Renato almost profited by his absurd manoeuvre; for as I drew clear to outflank him, a rascal with a swivel-gun on the roof of the Bargello let fly at me and the ball knocked the very casque off my head.

That hastened me still more—it would take the rogue no more than two minutes to reload; and in that time, I decided, Pietro II must be Tyrant of Crissale and all who would fire on his officers rebels and outlaws.

But in the moment whenas my attention had been distracted by that shot, my lord Renato had in turn flanked me and taken the upper ground; wherefrom he was pressing me so that I could not detach myself. He was an excellent swordsman—though, as all amateurs are, a little over-eager when it seemed that he was winning; and it is to this fact, and the circumstance that I had been wounded theretofore, that Your Grace owes enjoyment of Crissale at this day.

It was a matter of seconds, now, whether Pietro II would gain those lands or lose fifty men and their captain; for soldiers were pouring into the square from every side and some of them—notwithstanding that I was so closely engaged with their lord—were beginning to practise at me with arquebuses. The remnants of my fifty, presently forming cordon about the church steps, could not hold much longer—and then—

My wound was in the leg. I had not felt it, in the confusion. Only I noted, when I was outflanking Renato, that I left bloody footprints on the white marble steps.

Now I stood still, repelling his attack while the mob howled behind me; and only after a full minute of wrist work gave way, as if reluctantly, from the step on which I'd stood, to the next lower.

His eyes fixed, as of course was quite proper, on my point, the lord Renato followed me—too eagerly, as I had known he would; and of course, putting his descending foot into the pool of blood I'd left he slipped, impaling himself almost without help upon my blade.

I hope he died at once; but in any case, there was no time for delicacy.

Thrusting him off my sword and murmuring, "If your lordship will excuse me—" I had his head off in an instant, and the next instant was at the top of the cathedral steps, holding the head by the hair and shouting, *"Evviva Pietro, Duce di Crissale!"*

I CALLED your grandfather a duke, though of course he was still only a count, because men act without reason (else should I have no trade!) and meseemed the crowd might be less apt to murder a duke's officers, than a count's. I yelled again and again, and brandished the head where it would catch the best light from the torches, until the crowd halted to stare; and then stayed halted.

I stopped yelling then; but even so, they might have rushed me had not Fra Matteo chosen this moment to come wandering out of the cathedral—where, all unconscious of the battle, he had most like been praying. I was not conscious of him—nor, I quite believe, dazzled by the torches, was he of me until he appeared blinking under my upraised right arm.

Still less was he conscious of what that arm supported until certain warm drops fell on his tonsure.

Then he looked up and his childish face blanched so far as was possible in the red glare of the torchlight. His mouth came open like a baby's, and his lips trembled, but he did not shrink or cry out—nay, as friend of the poor he had seen worse horrors than could possibly assail a noble. He only crossed himself and went down on his knees.

And to make the story short, Your Grace, so did the rascals in the square. I will not say whether I did, or did not, because that is no one's business but my own, and a soldier executing his duty to his lord hath no need of pardon, unless he choose to ask for it. I will say this, though; that when Matteo came to praying in Italian, he might have been a little more considerate of my feelings. He alluded to me as a bloody man, and asked mercy for Renato, slain as a result of the first good deed of his life.

Well, Sire—this accusation of violence (beyond the call of duty, of course) I fell I can ignore.

It is with the fate of Renato, and the cause thereof, that I would have Your Eminence concern himself.

Had his lordship been a good man and added one good deed to his score, doubtless he would have thriven the more for it, both here and hereafter, but I think especially of here. Being a bad man, he did one good deed and died of it.

I have set forth the facts, which Your Grace can certainly interpret better than I can. Meseems there is something in Holy Writ about patching an old cloak with new cloth.

Whether there is also something about patching new hose with old cloth, I do not know, my studies having been interrupted by various wars; but it seems to me reasonable.

To come to the point—if unaccustomed mercy led to the ruin of Renato, may not (I wonder) unaccustomed severity cause some slight inconvenience to Your Grace? 'Tis years now since there have been scaffolds and fires and red-hot pincers in the market-place, and the folk have ceased to expect them of Your Eminence. They would be so surprised that they might well express their amazement in revolt.

(The woman Ubaldo in grovelling at my feet now, and disturbing the train of my thoughts.)

Renato's evil courses were damnable—Go away woman!—but I ask myself whether (from an earthly point of view) he would not have done better to continue in them. Similarly though I long protested against the clemency of Your Highness, I think that having practised it so long, Your Grace might be well advised to remain obstinate.

Being a soldier (I know) is a skilled profession, not to be confused with the business of being (for instance) a monk. So, I have come to believe since Renato's day, is the trade of a bad man; not to be diluted with virtue.

And so is the condition of a good man, Your Highness

Though beyond the personal experience

Of Your Lordship's loving humble servant,

L. CARADOSSO
Captain.

ENDORSEMENT BY THE DUKE

Manfredi:

Can this Ubaldo be yet *another* of Caradosso's sons? No matter. Whip the lad well and send him home to his mother.

P.
Dvx.

# HANDGUNS OF GLORY

By CHARLES EDWARD CHAPEL

GUNS DRAWN BY PETER KUHLHOFF

*The Dawn of American Martial History*

IT HAS been correctly said that America was won with the rifle, but the whole truth is that pistols and revolvers often played decisive parts in the hands of the Americans who fought for liberty from Concord to World War II. Bravery alone has never been enough. The pistols and revolvers that supplemented the rifles and muskets in winning victories and enforcing our rights as a free people have been designed, developed and manufactured by Yankee genius in our wars from the Revolution to the present. To those who know little and care less about our colorful and romantic past, the pistols and revolvers are nothing but wood and iron, but to those who look for the story of the men behind the handguns, they are precious symbols of our national existence; they are the arms of glory!

The first American pistols were not

rifled. They were single-shot smoothbores that were little more than small versions of single-shot, smoothbore muskets of the same period. These crude and comparatively inaccurate weapons were the ancestors of the automatic pistols and the revolvers of today. Understanding the ancient arms helps us to gain a wider knowledge of modern weapons.

When Miles Standish, back in Pilgrim days, mustered a company of volunteers for a battle with the Indians, his men carried a veritable museum of firearms because that was a period of transition in the development of weapons. He himself had a wheel-lock musket, and also a wheel-lock pistol. These firearms had a steel wheel with notches that revolved against a piece of flint or pyrites to produce sparks and light the powder to fire the gun. A few of his soldiers owned "snaphance" muskets and pistols. These were flint-lock guns which were just as effective as a wheel-lock but cheaper and simpler to operate. However, most of his followers were too poor to own their own arms and had to draw them from the community store-house. Since wheel-lock arms took longer to make, required the services of trained men to make and repair, and cost more, they were always comparatively rare even in the period in which they flourished. Today, they are rare and valuable in good condition if they are genuine. Many fakes are found.

The muskets and pistols issued from the store-house to the average citizen, or owned by him if he were prosperous, were matchlocks, so called because there was no flint-and-steel device for setting fire to the powder charge. Instead, there was a piece of slender rope, soaked in nitre, to make it burn easily.

When the trigger was pulled, the burning end of the nitre-soaked rope ("match") dropped into a pan at the rear of the barrel. There, it set fire to the fine priming powder held in the pan. Opposite the pan there was a hole in the barrel. The fire in the pan went through this hole ("touch-hole") and ignited the main charge of powder, thus discharging the bullet, which was a round lead ball, usually ranging in diameter from a little less than three-quarters of an inch to slightly more. The exact size of the ball varied because the gun-makers did not make all their weapons of the same bore size.

When Miles Standish led his men in expeditions against the hostile Indians, match-lock muskets were fired at the enemy and pistols were used only at close quarters. There were many complaints about the guns because a few drops of rain would put out the match, its fire and smoke betrayed the presence of the white soldiers to the Indians and brought down a shower of arrows.

The snaphance muskets and pistols carried by the few who bought their own arms and barrels and stocks which were like those on the matchlocks, but the firing mechanism was better. Instead of the trigger lowering a burning end of a piece of nitre-soaked rope into the pan, the pulling of the trigger released a hammer holding a piece of flint that struck a steel plate to make sparks. If the wind did not blow the priming powder out of the pan, and if the rain did not wet it just when it was needed, the gun fired. However, none of these arms were accurate. Their principal value lay in scaring the Indians with the loud noise, the flash of fire, and the great clouds of smoke.

### *Americans Fight With British Against the French*

YEARS passed. The sons and grandsons of those who fought under Miles Standish served in militia companies with British regulars. They were still armed with single-shot, smoothbore, muzzle-loading muskets and pistols. The only improvement was in the pan that held the priming powder. Instead of leaving the fine priming powder exposed to the wind and the rain, the steel plate against which the flint struck to make sparks was now bent so that it covered the pan until the trigger was pulled. It then was knocked out of the way by the flint as it hit the steel plate to make sparks, thus uncovering the priming powder and exposing it to the sparks so that it could catch fire and communicate its fire through the touch-hole to the main charge of powder behind the bullet.

When the Americans served with the British in the campaigns against the

French and the Indians, they tried to be detailed on detached duty so that they could deploy and fight "Indian style" instead of firing from close formations in the manner of the armies of Eurpoe. This was especially true of mounted American troops. They were usually armed with short muskets, called "muskетoons," and with large flintlock pistols. Whenever possible, the Americans dismounted, left their horses with a few men, and fought with muskets, using pistols only during a charge or in repelling an attack at close quarters. However, when fighting from horseback they would ride against the enemy, discharge one or two pistols, wheel around, go to the rear, re-load and return to fire more volleys.

### *Source of Supply of Flintlock Pistols*

AS SUBJECTS of the British Crown, the Colonial Americans were armed with British pistols. Some of these were made by private British gun-makers, some were made in British government armories, and many were imported from Europe. In some cases, the pistols were made in England except for the locks which were imported from Europe.

Americans were not permitted to develop industries of any importance. The British especially discouraged the manufacture of gunpowder and firearms in America, partly to advance British manufactures at home, and partly to prevent the Americans from becoming too independent of the Mother Country. However, in spite of the restrictions, there was a flourishing arms industry long before the American Revolution. American makers supplied most of the flintlock pistols used during the Revolution and the War of 1812. After the War of 1812, percussion (cap-and-ball) weapons were developed. We shall now examine in detail the actual flintlock pistols made and used in America by our regular forces during the Revolution and the War of 1812.

### *U. S. Martial Flintlock Pistols*

THE flintlock pistols made in the United States armories at Harpers Ferry, Virginia, and Springfield, Massachusetts, or by private gunmakers and companies under contract with the United States, or for distribution to the state forces under federal jurisdiction, are regarded as U. S. martial flintlock pistols. This distinction must be made because there were many flintlock pistols used by the state troops, the crews of privateers, and various individuals which belong in their own classification.

In 1777, the Congress of the United States passed a resolution that all arms belonging to the United States be stamped or marked with the words "United States." This was generally obeyed, but some arms were not marked at all, some were marked "U. States" and others were stamped "U. S." The presence of one of these markings does not, by itself, mean that a flintlock pistol was a United States weapon. Likewise, the absence of the marking does not condemn it.

The first was the U. S. Pistol, Model 1799, North & Cheney, caliber .69 smoothbore, with an 8.5-inch barrel, a total length of 14.5 inches, and a weight

of 3 pounds, 4 ounces. The trigger guard, frame, and butt cap were made of brass. Actually, it was copied from the French Army Model 1777 Pistol except that the American pistol had a longer barrel and various minor variations.

The second was the U. S. Pistol, Model 1805, Harpers Ferry, caliber .54 smoothbore, with a 10.625-inch round barrel, fastened to the stock by a "key." It is called "Harpers Ferry" because it was made in our national armory at Harpers Ferry, Virginia. Although it was authorized in 1805, most specimens were probably made in 1807.

Historians argue about whether there was a pistol that should be called U. S. Pistol, Model 1807, Springfield. Most of them seem to think that no such model existed and that the one receiving this title was actually the U. S. Pistol, Model 1817, Springfield, described below.

The next pistol in historical order was one made by contractors, and not by the national armories. It was carried by the regular enlisted men of the federal forces, and probably by the officers and enlisted men of the state troops, hence it can be classed as either a United States or a Secondary United States Martial weapon. Collectors call it the U. S. Pistol, Model 1807-1808. It resembled the U. S. Pistol, Model 1805, Harpers Ferry, described above, except that the barrel was usually pin-fastened to the stock and the stock generally ran the whole length of the barrel.

In addition to the main lot of pistols made by contractors, O. & E. Evans made one under the 1807-1808 contracts which resembled a French Cavalry Pistol of the period of 1800-1801. It was caliber .689, had a 7.87-inch barrel, and was 14.546 inches long. Some specimens have "Evans" marked on the lockplate.

A gunmaker named Samuel North, of North Berlin, Connecticut, made a number of important U. S. martial flintlock pistols. The first was the U. S. Pistol, Model 1808, S. North, Navy, which was caliber .64, had a 10.125-inch round, smoothbore, pin-fastened, browned barrel; a walnut stock running to ¼-inch from the muzzle, a total length of 16.25 inches, and a weight of 2 pounds, 14 ounces. It did not have sights. There was an iron belt hook on the left so that sailors could easily carry it where they could draw and fire quickly in the boarding and leading attacks of that period.

Samuel North then made one for the Army, called the U. S. Pistol, Model 1811, S. North, Army. It was caliber .69, with a 8.625-inch, round, smoothbore, pin-fastened barrel, a walnut stock extending almost to the muzzle, a total length of 15 inches, and a weight of 2 pounds, 11 ounces. Since the Army could carry this in a holster, no belt hook was provided.

The armed services wanted improved arms. North obliged by developing his U. S. Pistol, Model 1813, which was made for the Army without a belthook and for the Navy with a hook on the left. This was caliber .69 smoothbore, with a round barrel banded to the stock with double straps. The walnut stock ended at the forward edge of the barrel band instead of extending almost to the muzzle as it had in certain previous models. The total length was 15.3 inches and the weight was 3 pounds, 3 ounces.

There was the usual howl that the government ought to make its own arms, hence the Springfield Armory produced

the U. S. Pistol, Model 1817, caliber .69, with a 11.06-inch, round, smoothbore barrel held by a double-strap iron band. It had a brass sight, a lock plate with a blunt rear end, and several other distinctive features that distinguished it from the earlier, Model 1807 Springfield Pistol. However, the government did not move fast in producing this pistol and there are doubts that it was issued to the Army for actual use in the field, although it was certainly tested by small groups.

Having failed to achieve quantity production in a national armory, the government went back to Samuel North again. He produced his U. S. Pistol, Model 1819, in both Army and Navy versions. Both were caliber .54 smoothbore. The Army version had a 10-inch round barrel with a brass sight on the muzzle, held by a single spring-fastened band. The Navy model had a belt hook on the left and an 8.5-inch round barrel which lacked the safety lock provided for the Army pistol.

The armed forces were so well satisfied with this North job that he produced the U. S. Pistol, Model 1826, for both the Army and the Navy. Both were caliber .54, smoothbore, with a browned barrel held by a single spring-fastened band, with a brass sight on the muzzle. The Navy model had the usual belthook on the left. Some specimens are found with a barrel which was coated with tin to resist rusting.

Samuel North could not make all the pistols for the government. W. L. Evans made the U. S. Pistol, Model 1826, for the Navy. This was caliber .54, with an 8.625-inch, round, smoothbore, browned barrel held by a single spring-fastened band, with a brass sight on the muzzle. The total length was 13.375 inches and the weight was 2 pounds, 4 ounces. The lock plate is marked "U. S. N." behind the hammer and "W. L. Evans" in front of the hammer. Some specimens are marked "V. Forge" because it must be understood that Valley Forge, Pennsylvania, was actually the location of a forge for making firearms, as well as the location of George Washington's encampment during the Revolution. In addition, some specimens were made at Evansburg, Pennsylvania, and so marked.

R. Johnson, who marked his pistols "R. Johnson, Middn Conn.," made the U. S. Pistol, Model 1836, for the Army. It was caliber .54, with an 8.5-inch, round, smoothbore, bright-finished barrel, held on the stock by a single branchband. The walnut stock extended only three-fourths of the length. The total length was 14.25 inches and the weight was 2 pounds, 10 ounces.

Pistols similar to the Johnson Pistol were made for the Army and marked on the lock plate either "A. Waters, Milbury, Ms.", or "A. H. Waters & Co., Milbury, Mass.," with the date.

This ends the description of the true United States flintlock pistols, all of which were used by our armed forces during the Revolution, the War of 1812, and the minor campaigns on land and sea that followed each of those major wars.

### *Kentucky Flintlock Pistols*

MOST men know that the rifle which was commonly called the "Kentucky Rifle" was actually developed in Pennsylvania and received the Kentucky designation because it was the favorie weapon of Daniel Boone and his associates in the great westward movement of pioneers through that vast region of wilderness west of the Cumberland River. That area included not only the present State of Kentucky, but portions of many other states.

Those who are familar with the story of the Kentucky Rifle realize that it was widely used in our colonial campaigns. the Revolutionary War, the War of 1812, the Mexican War, and even the Civil War. Of course, beginning about 1825, it was a percussion (cap-and-ball) weapon, but it was nevertheless the same rifle.

Few people, regardless of their knowledge of history, realize that the same men who made the Kentucky Rifle also made what we now call Kentucky Pistols. These weapons were discovered as a distinct type by Calvin Hetrick, of New Enterprise, Pennsylvania, and announced to the world for the first time by the author of this article in the first edition of his book, *The Gun Collector's Handbook of Values*, published in 1940. This

classification has been confirmed by countless experts who have unearthed many fine specimens of this distinctively American firearm, making it possible for the author again to proclaim the authenticity of the Kentucky Pistol in his 1947 revision of the same book.

The true Kentucky Pistol is really a miniature Kentucky Rifle with a slender stock and "furniture" (trigger guard, ramrod thimble, muzzle cap, etc.) like the Kentucky Rifle. It is full-stocked, that is, the wooden stock extends to the muzzle. A half-stocked pistol is not considered a true Kentucky Pistol. In design, the Kentucky Pistol is characterized by individuality; it is as individual as the man who made it back in the young days of this great republic. No maker ever made two exactly alike unless he was producing a matched pair, and no maker ever copied the design of another.

They are usually unmarked because the makers were afraid that if the pistols were captured the British would hunt for the makers and kill them. Furthermore, comparatively few were made in comparison to the thousands of Kentucky Rifles. Today, about 50% are found in their original flintlock condition, about 37½% are conversions from flintlock to percussion, and about 12½% were originally made for percussion fire. Carried by our officers and enlisted men, the Kentucky Pistols played their part in the colonial wars, the Revolution, the War of 1812, and campaigns between the War of 1812 and the Civil War.

### *Percussion (Cap-and-Ball) Pistols*

THE percussion lock, commonly called "cap-and-ball," was invented in 1807 by a Presbyterian Minister named Alexander Forsyth, who lived in Scotland. Next to the discovery of gunpowder, this was the most important invention in the history of firearms, because it laid a foundation for the development of the metallic cartridge, breech-loading, repeating arms, automatic fire, and most of the other improvements that we take for granted today.

The principle of the percussion lock is simple. When a small quantity of fulminate of mercury is struck with a sharp blow, it explodes and the explosion will set fire to gunpowder. Actually, the fulminate was enclosed in a little copper cup or "cap," called a "primer" in the later development of arms. The old flintlock mechanism was removed from the gun and a steel tube, called a "nipple" was driven into the hole in the rear of the barrel which had originally carried the flame from the priming powder in the pan to the main charge of powder behind the bullet.

The clumsy old jaws on the hammer of the flintlock were removed and the hammer was altered to look more as it does on modern arms. When the trigger was pulled, the steel hammer hit the copper percussion cap which had been inserted in the tube-like nipple, exploded the cap, and fired the weapon. There was no longer any need to worry about the effects of wind and rain ruining the priming powder. There was still a chance of mis-firing, and the accuracy was still poor, but firearms took a long step forward with the cap-lock.

The percussion pistols and revolvers were used in various campaigns between the War of 1812 and the Civil War, in the Mexican War, and throughout the Civil War. In the latter war, both percussion and cartridge arms could be found on the same battlefield, and often flintlocks were brought into the fight by irregular troops. We shall now examine the percussion pistols themselves.

### *U. S. Martial, Percussion, Single-Shot Pistols*

THE U. S. martial percussion pistols were made in the United States armories at Harpers Ferry, Virginia, and Springfield, Massachusetts, and by the following contractors: C. B. Allen, of Springfield, Massachusetts; Henry Aston, Middletown, Connecticut; the reorganized firm of H. Aston & Co., also of Middletown, Connecticut; Ira N. Johnson, Middletown, Connecticut; William Glaze & Co., Columbia, South Carolina, operating as the Palmetto Armory; N. P. Ames, Springfield, Massachusetts; and Henry Deringer, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. These weapons bear the model years of 1837, 1842, 1843, and 1855, hence the earlier models were used in

both the Mexican War and the Civil War, and the 1855 model was used in the Civil War.

The first of these percussion pistols was the U. S. Pistol, Model 1842, made by H. Aston for the Army and Navy. It was caliber .54, with an 8.5-inch, smoothbore, round barrel, a total length of 14 inches, and a weight of 2 pounds, 12 ounces. The Navy version had an anchor stamped at the rear of the barrel.

I. N. Johnson made a very similar pistol, and so did the Palmetto Armory, but the latter is the most interesting of these 1842 pistols because it is marked with a palmetto tree and the date on the breech, the lock plate is marked "Columbia, S. C.," with the date, and the barrel is marked "Wm. Glaze & Co." The manufacture of this pistol was the beginning of the efforts of South Carolina to produce its own weapons against the day when it would try to secede from the Union.

The Model 1843 pistols were all made by Deringer of Philadelphia and N. P. Ames, of Springfield, Massachusetts. The N. P. Ames version was marked "USR" for United States Mounted Rifles on the Army model and "USN" on the Navy model. The Deringer pistols also carried similar markings but they were interesting on account of the fact that Deringer abbreviated "Philadelphia" as "PHILADELa"—using all capital letters except for the final "a."

The 1843 pistols were caliber .54, smoothbore, with 6-inch, round, browned barrels without sights, or rifled with both front and rear sights, the difference depending upon the government order in each case. The total length was 11.625 inches.

An interesting development was the U. S. Pistol-Carbine, made at the national armories at Harpers Ferry and Springfield. Both were caliber .58, with 12-inch, round, rifled barrels. The length of each pistol without its stock was about 18 inches. The stock alone was about 11.5 inches long. When the stock was mounted to the pistol, the total length was about 26.5 inches. This increased length gave the shooter an increased "sighting radius"—that is, it provided more distance between his eye and the sights and made possible a greater accuracy in aiming. Strictly speaking, such weapons can be classified as shoulder arms, but the fact that the basic weapon is a pistol places them in the pistol classification for historical purposes.

An even more interesting development of the percussion was the Elgin Cutlass Pistol, made by C. B. Allen, of Springfield, Massachusetts. It was caliber .54, with a 5-inch, smoothbore, octagonal barrel having an iron-blade front sight. A knife or cutlass blade, 11.5 inches long, and 2.06 inches wide, was fastened in front of the trigger guard under the barrel. When not in use, the blade was carried in a leather scabbard. The United States contracted to purchase 150 of these on September 8,1837. They were intended for use by the Navy in repelling boarders and in boarding enemy ships.

### *Colt Percussion Revolvers Made at Paterson, N. J.*

THE word *pistol* has been applied frequently to all types of handguns, including single-shot pistols, revolvers, and automatic pistols. However, the earliest practical revolvers were true revolvers. These were the revolvers made by Samuel Colt at Paterson, New Jersey. They had revolving cylinders and all cylinders had five chambers, hence they were 5-shot revolvers. The whole story of the invention and development of revolvers by Samuel Colt would fill several books, but it is probably sufficient at this point to remind the reader that they were a Yankee invention, made on the mass-production, assembly-line system, with the parts of one interchangeable with the parts of another. Of course, this was not true of the very earliest Colt revolvers but as soon as Colt began to sell in quantity he developed manufacturing methods that set a standard followed even today.

The Colt percussion revolvers made at Paterson were described by Colt as Pocket Pistols, Belt Pistols, and Holster Pistols.

The Pocket pistols were normally of .28, .31, or .34 caliber. The Belt pistols were normally either caliber .31 or caliber .34. The Holster pistols were all

caliber .36. There was a wide range of barrel lengths for each type. All of them bearing the Paterson marks are today rare and very valuable. A few of long barrel length, large caliber, and large frame were used to some extent in battle, but as a group they are important principally as ancestors of our other martial revolvers.

*Whitneyville-Walker Colt Revolver*

THE Colt Army Revolver, Model 1847, also called Colt-Walker Model 1847, Whitneyville Walker, and Walker Pistol, was made for Samuel Colt at Whitneyville, Conn., under contract. It was caliber .44, 6-shot, single-action, with a 9-inch round barrel, a total length of 15.5 inches and a weight of 4 pounds, 9 ounces.

This was issued to the United States Mounted Rifles (a form of cavalry) and also to other forces of the United States requiring a reliable side-arm.

*Hartford Colt Percussion Revolvers*

BEGINNING with the Colt Army Revolver, Model 1848, all Colt arms, both percussion and cartridge, were made at Hartford, Conn. The Model 1848 was also known as the Improved Holster Pistol, the Old Model Holster Pistol, the Old Model Army Pistol, Model of 1848 Holster Pistol, the Dragoon Colt, etc. It was caliber .44, 6-shot, single-action, with a 7.5-inch round barrel, a total length of 14 inches, and a weight of 4 pounds, 1 ounce. There were several variations. For example, it was made in some cases to be equipped with a shoulder stock, and some shoulder stocks had a canteen in the butt. It was principally carried by U. S. Mounted Rifles, and by Dragoons, both being early names for cavalry, but it was also used by foot troops.

This was followed by what the collectors call the "1848, 1849, and 1850 Models," but they were not martial weapons from the technical viewpoint, although they were used by individuals in battles.

The Colt Model 1851 Navy Revolver, also called Old Model Belt Pistol, Old Model Navy Pistol, Model of 1851 Navy, and Model of 1851 Navy Pistol, was a martial revolver, caliber .36, 6-shot, single-action, with a 7.5 inch octagon barrel, a total length of 13 inches, and a weight of 2 pounds, 10 ounces.

Although primarily intended for naval use, it was also used by land forces in battle.

Colt then made several varieties of pocket revolvers before making his Colt Army Revolver, Model 1860. This was also called the New Model Holster Pistol, New Model Army Pistol, and Round-barrelled Army Pistol. It was caliber .44, 6-shot, single-action, with an 8-inch round barrel, a total length of 14 inches, and a weight of 2 pounds, 11 ounces.

Some were made for attaching a shoulder stock.

Not to be outdone by the Army, the U. S. Navy ordered from Colt the Colt Model 1861 Navy Revolver, also called New Model Belt Pistol, New Model Navy Pistol, Model of 1861 Navy Pistol, and Round-barrelled Navy. It was caliber .36, 6-shot, single-action, with a 7.5-inch round barrel, a total length of 13 inches, and weighed 2 pounds, 9 ounces, or slightly more in some cases. Notice that the Army caliber was .44 and the Navy caliber was .36.

This difference in caliber was based on idea that the Navy did not need such a powerful weapon.

Colt then brought out his New Model Police Pistol, also called Model of 1862 Pocket Pistol, Officers' Model Pocket Pistol, 1862 Belt Model, and New Model Police Pistol with Creeping Lever Ramrod.

It was caliber .36, 5-shot, and single-action, with a 6.5-inch round barrel, a total length of 12 inches, and weighed about 1 pound, 10 ounces. Strictly speaking, it was not a U. S. martial arm, although it was used as a personal weapon by U. S. officers during the Civil War.

The Colt New Model Pocket Pistol of Navy Caliber, also called Pocket Navy Revolver, and Pocket Navy Pistol, was another weapon which was carried principally as a personal weapon and not as an official arm. It was caliber .36, 5-shot, single-action, with various barrel lengths.

### *Colt Percussion Revolvers Converted to Fire Metallic Cartridges*

THERE was a transition period between the close of the percussion period and the beginning of the cartridge period in firearm development when percussion arms were converted to fire metallic cartridges. Some of these conversions, or alterations, were made in the factories, some were made by the U. S. Government, and many were made by private gunsmiths. It is difficult to state with any certainty which ones can be called martial for this was an era of fast changes and general instability in government and industry, such as we have at the close of all great wars. Most of this particular transition occurred at the close of the Civil War.

### *Percussion Revolvers Used in the Civil War*

IN ADDITION to the Colt percussion revolvers already described, most of which were used either officially or privately during the Civil War, the United States purchased for its forces Allen & Wheelock, Joslyn, Pettingill, Remington caliber .44 and caliber .36, Remington-Beals caliber .44, Rogers and Spencer, Savage Navy, Starr caliber .44 and Whitney Navy revolvers. Revolvers were also imported from Europe and issued to the Union Army.

### *Confederate Pistols and Revolvers*

AT THE outbreak of the Civil War, the Confederate States had in their possession great quantities of United States arms. All weapons which were used by the United States forces were also used by Confederate forces. In addition, the Confederates bought arms from Europe and also made their own in their own armories. These latter arms are especially interesting. Unfortunately, little has been written on this subject. The most comprehensive text is *Firearms of the Confederacy*, by Claud E. Fuller and Richard D. Steuart, published by Standard Publications, Inc., Huntington, West Virginia. The author of this article has devoted two long chapters to Confederate arms in the revised edition of

*The Gun Collector's Handbook of Values.*

### *The Beginning of Cartridge Arms*

BEFORE the Civil War had lasted many months, cartridge arms came into use, but they did not develop greatly until the close of that conflict. Instead of having a separate primer ("cap"), the detonating substance was built into the cartridge case itself. This made it possible to develop repeating arms and later automatic weapons. We shall now turn to an examination of the single-shot cartridge pistols of martial use.

### *U. S. Martial Single-Shot Cartridge Pistols*

THERE were only three U. S. martial single-shot cartridge pistols. All of them were made by Remington. They

represent a transition between the percussion pistols and revolvers of the Civil War and the cartridge revolvers adopted for our armed forces during the Indian Wars that took place between the close of the Civil War and the beginning of the Spanish-American War.

The first was the U. S. Navy, Model 1866, Remington Single-Shot Pistol. It was caliber .50 r.f., with an 8.5-inch round, blued, rifled barrel marked with an anchor to show that it was Navy property. The total length was 13.25 inches and the weight was 2 pounds, 4 ounces.

The second was the U. S. Navy, Model 1867, Remington Single-Shot Pistol, caliber .50, c.f., with a 7-inch, round, blued, rifled barrel marked with an anchor and initials. The total length was 11.75 inches and the weight was 2 pounds, hence this was a smaller and lighter weapon than the earlier model which was made for the Navy.

The third was the U. S. Army, Model 1871, Remington Single-Shot Pistol, caliber .50 c.f., with an 8-inch, round, blued, rifled barrel. The total length was 12 inches and the weight was 2 pounds. It resembled the Navy Model of 1867 except for the grip, a slight difference in the front sight, and the barrel length.

Some firearms collectors, dealers and authors have made a serious mistake by listing a so-called U. S. Single-Shot Army Pistol, Model 1869, Springfield. There is no such weapon and it never existed.

The pistol given this erroneous title was nothing but a number of odd pieces taken from the U. S. Rifle, Model 1868, and the U. S. Rifled Musket, Model 1863. It is difficult to say whether the legend of this pistol was started by a dishonest person who wanted to make easy money or by a practical joker, but the result is the same.

Many persons have been defrauded by buying this "joke" gun.

### *U. S. Martial Cartridge Revolvers*

ALL U. S. martial cartridge revolvers were made by either Colt or Smith & Wesson except one which was made by Remington. They were used by our armed forces in the campaigns against the Indians in the West, the Spanish-American War, the Philippine Insurrection, the Boxer rebellion, World War I, World War II, and the various small wars and campaigns conducted principally by the United States Marine Corps under orders from the State and Navy Departments.

In order to keep the record straight, we shall list the U. S. martial cartridge revolvers, starting with the Colts: Colt Single-Action Army Revolver, originally called the New Army Metallic Cartridge Revolving Pistol; Colt Double-Action Army or Frontier Revolver, Model 1878; Colt New Navy, Double-Action, Self-Cocking Revolver, Model 1892; Colt New Army Models 1892, 1894, and 1896; Colt Army Model 1901; Colt Army Model 1903; Colt Marine Corps Model 1905 (sometimes called Marine Corps Model 1907); Colt New Service Revolver, Model 1909; the Marine Corps Modification of the Colt New Service Revolvers, Model 1909; and Colt Army Revolver, Model 1917. The martial revolvers other than Colts were: Remington New Model 1874 Army Revolver; Smith & Wesson Army Revolver, Model 1875, Schofield

Patent; Smith & Wesson Army Revolver, Model 1899; Smith & Wesson Navy Revolver, Model 1899; and Smith & Wesson Army Revolver, Model 1917.

Models used in World War II are discussed below.

*Automatic Pistols*

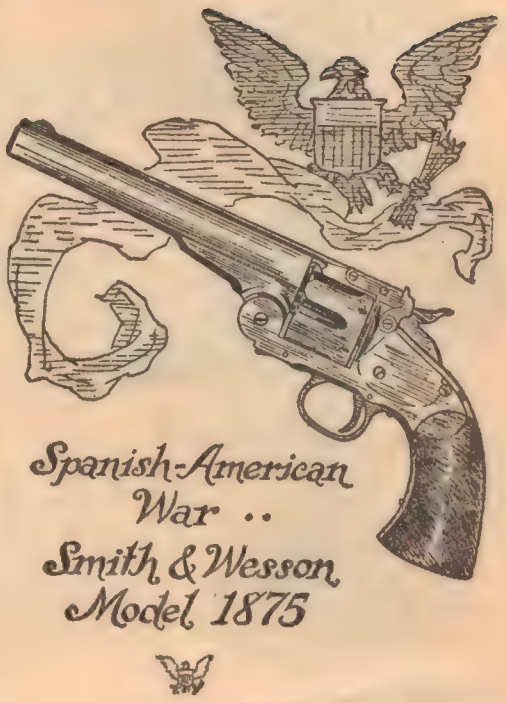
THE only surviving automatic pistol today in U. S. martial use is the Colt Government Model of 1911 Automatic Pistol, .45 caliber, also called Model 1911 Automatic Pistol. Before this was developed, Colt produced a whole series of models of automatic pistols, beginning with the Model of 1900, which was caliber .38 and leading up to the Colt Military Model Automatic, .45 caliber, sometimes called the Model 1905 Automatic Pistol.

This pistol was the immediate predecessor of the Model 1911 and was the first caliber .45 military automatic pistol made by Colt. Production started in 1905 and continued until 1911 when the first form of the present Model 1911 was produced.

Few people realize that several manufacturers in America have made automatic pistols. For example, there were the Smith & Wesson models of 1913 and 1925, and various automatic pistols made by Fiala Outfitters, Grant-Hammond, Harrington & Richardson, Hartford Arms and Equipment Co., Remington, Savage, Union Fire Arms Co., and various obscure small makers. These do not include automatic pistols still in production, such as those made by High Standard Arms Co. and others, but the general conclusion is that Colt has had the monopoly of the supplying of automatic pistols to the United States for martial use.

*World War II Models*

IN WORLD WAR II, Colt and Smith & Wesson continued to turn out such of their existing models as could be used for official and home defense purposes. They also brought out variations which may be regarded as World War II models.




Typical examples are the Caliber .38 Special Victory Model Revolver made by Smith & Wesson, and the S. & W. .38-200 Service Revolver, both of which were merely modifications of existing arms.

*Conclusion*

NO NATION on earth has made the progress in the development of firearms achieved by the United States. The atom bomb has not made rifles, pistols and revolvers obsolete because you can capture a nation with airplanes and atom bombs, but you must hold it after capture with the rifles, the pistols, and the revolvers—for these always have been and always will be the Guns of Glory!

*Statements herein are the personal opinions of the author. They do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the Navy Department or the naval service at large.*
*—C.E.C.*

# ASK ADVENTURE

*Information You Can't Get Elsewhere*

## DERBY winner.

Query:—Will you please send me any information you may have on Assault, the clubfooted race horse? Who is the owner of this horse, and the jockey?

—Ray Proctor
Box 364
Marion, N.C.

Reply by John Richard Young:—Assault is not clubfooted. That term is merely some newspaperman's convenient way of describing his foot deformity. As a colt running out in pasture in the spring, when horses' feet are usually quite soft due to rain and heavy dew, Assault stepped on a thorn. The thorn entered his foot just inside the shell of the hoof. The injury caused the frog of the foot to grow abnormally and the shell of the hoof, weakened by the thorn, curved. This causes Assault to walk on the toe of that foot and to correct this he requires a special shoe. Even so, he has a peculiar gait at the walk and canter, but when he runs at speed his stride is smooth and normal.

Assault is a chestnut, sired by Bold Venture and out of the mare Igual. Bold Venture himself won the Kentucky Derby and the Preakness. Igual, a rather undersized mare, was never trained or raced. As a youngster she was sickly, handicapped by a concealed abscess in her flank. Once, however, the abscess was discovered and lanced, she proved herself an effortless, speedy runner.

Assault was bred by Robert J. Kleberg, Jr., president and manager of the King Ranch, Kingsville, Texas, and trained by another native Texan, Max Hirsch, who also trained Assault's sire, Bold Venture. In winning the "Triple Crown" (the Derby, the Preakness and the Belmont), Assault was ridden by Warren Mehrtens, a native of Brooklyn who once studied to be a bookkeeper.

When Assault won the Derby he and Bold Venture became one of only five sire-son combinations to win this classic. The other four winning sires and sons are:

Alan-a-Dale (1902) sired by Halma (1895).

Burgoo King (1932) sired by Bubbling Over (1926).

Omaha (1935) sired by Gallant Fox (1930).

Count Fleet (1943) sired by Reigh Count (1928).

## THE succulent sea bass.

Query:—What is the average weight of "Sea Bass" and what is the largest ever taken?

—John Peroni
506 Tinton Ave.,
Bronx 55,
New York City, N. Y.

Reply by C. Blackburn Miller:—The average weight of "Sea Bass" is about two pounds, though many weigh more than that.

The largest ever taken was one that was caught off New York some years ago. It weighed eight pounds, two ounces.

## CANOEING Canada's great Peace River.

Query:—I have had an inquiry from a Madamoiselle Arlette Ecrement, 4 Boulevard des Brotteaux, Lyon (Rhone), France, which I am unable to answer. I wonder if you can help the lady. My French is only "fair" but her letter reads about as follows:

"I desire to investigate how they live on the Peace River starting from its source in Rocheuses or Lake Athabasca. I intend to descend it in a wooden canoe with guides or if not a wooden canoe, will bring a demountable Kyack. I will leave from Edmonton, taking train to Prince George and then going on foot to source of Peace River 50 miles from there. Going to camp on bank and study inhabitants before starting down.

I ask if a Kyack is suitable for the Peace River. I expect to make descent of river in June and July. Where can I obtain equipment and guides?"

Mlle. Ecrement has French films of canoeing, camping, etc., which she wishes to show in this country; also give lectures, for pay, to meet expenses. She is a member of the French Alpine Club and French Canoe Federation and states that the Alpine Club has retained her to teach them the practice of canoeing on rivers, especially turbulent ones. She was referred to me by M. Courtecuis, President of the French Canoe Federation.

She must be quite a lady—and from what I have heard of the Peace River District, she is evidently planning quite a trip!

—Oscar S. Tyson
President Board of Governors
American Canoe Association
230 Park Ave., N. Y. C., N. Y.

Reply to Mlle. Ecrement by Philip H. Godsell:—Your request for information regarding a trip down the Peace river by canoe this summer has been referred to me via Mr. Oscar S. Tyson of the American Canoe Association.

Incidentally you refer to the source of the Peace River being in the Rocheuses or Lake Athabasca. This is the mouth of the Peace River which enters the Slave River about 40 miles north of Lake Athabasca. The source of the Peace is west of the Rockies and the Peace River proper is formed by the junction of the Finlay and the Parsnip. Your best plan would be to proceed through to Prince George—formerly Fort George, a Hudson's Bay Post—but now a thriving town that caters to trappers, settlers, tourists, etc., and obtain your guides there. You would have no difficulty following the tributaries down to the junction of the Finlay and Parsnip, though the country is still pretty wild and inhabited only by wandering Indians, trappers and frontiersmen, with practically no settlement till you reach Hudson's Hope six miles beyond the mouth of the sixty-mile Peace River canyon, when you are just coming out of the Rocky Mountain range in the vicinity of Bull Mountain.

A twelve mile portage trail starts from the head of the canyon which is very tumultuous and entirely unfit for canoe transportation. In fact it was in this canyon that Sir Alexander Mackenzie nearly came to grief on his memorable canoe journey across Canada by land to the Pacific Ocean in 1792. In the summer of 1798 Simon Frazer, the explorer, reared the first fort in this region, Rocky Mountain Fort, on the west end of the portage and it became the center for a large trade in bear, beaver, marten and other skins with the Beaver and Sickannie Indians. Later the post was moved downriver and became known as Fort D'Epinette, or Lone Pine Fort. It was burned down by the Beaver Indians in 1823 and Guy Hughes, the Hudson's Bay factor and his four men were all massacred, because they refused to supply the Beavers with all the firewater they wanted. Returning from a hunt next day Baptiste Le Fleur and another French employee were saved from a similar fate by Chief Pouce Coupe of the Southern Beaver tribe. Crossing the Peace with a band of warriors he upbraided the northern Beavers for their rash act, furnished the survivors with a dugout canoe and dried meat and saw that they got safely down to Fort Dunvegan (which you will pass on your way downstream, though the fort has been abandoned for quite a number of years).

Launching your canoe at Hudson's Hope you will have uninterrupted canoe navigation to the Chutes about fifty miles below Fort Vermillion, around which is a good portage, and beyond that easy paddling down to the Slave River, where you can proceed upstream forty odd miles to Fort Chipewyan on Lake Athabasca and take one of the Northern Navigation Company's or Hudson's Bay Company's weekly boats to the end-of-steel at Waterways and board the weekly "Muskeg Limited" (Alberta and Great Waterway's train) for Edmonton, some three hundred miles away.

Hudson's Hope is just a Hudson's Bay post and a scattering of trappers' cabins, but a very pretty and interesting little spot. You should also make a point of visiting the Canyon while you're there as it is one of the beauty spots of the Peace River country; a spot where the footprints of dinosaurs can still be seen imbedded in the rocks. There are one or two trapper-outfitters there who would take you into the mountains or to spots along the canyon, supplying packhorses if necessary. Sixty miles below Hudson's Hope you come to Fort St. John. The old fort, where I lived and traded with the Beaver Indians back in 1911, was burned down by children a few years ago, but a nine mile road leads to the modern Fort St. John—an up-to-date and interesting frontier town—jumping-off place for Col. Hodge and the American doughboys, when, in 1942, they commenced the stupendous engineering feat of hacking an eighteen hundred mile international highway through the wilderness to carry tanks, troops, and munitions to Alaska, to defend it from the imminent threat of Nipponese aggression. Incidentally I blazed the first link in this now noted Highway from Fort St. John, 300 miles northward to Fort Nelson, back in 1925-27. If you are contemplating visiting Fort St. John, the best thing to do would be to paddle on downstream twelve miles to Taylor's Flats, where a magnificent three million dollar bridge was built by American engineers as a part of the Highway project and presented later as a goodwill gesture to Canada. Busses run regularly from Dawson Creek—sixty miles to the southward—right through to Fairbanks, Alaska, while other busses also carry passengers between Ft. St. John (town) and Dawson Creek. A side trip to Dawson Creek, the boom town of the Alaska Highway construction days, would also be of interest.

Continuing on down from Taylor's Flats you see very little sign of life as all the set-

tlers are now established on the nine hundred foot plateau on the north bank, now bisected by an arm of the Northern Alberta Railway, where there are prosperous farms, towns and settlements. It would pay you when you get to Peace River—a picturesque town of some 3,000 at the junction of the Peace and Smokey, to take a look around and take a run through this settled region by train as far as Hines Creek—which runs three times a week. Leaving Peace River (town) there is comparatively little settlement along the river except at Battle River till you reach the flourishing frontier settlement of Fort Vermillion in the center of the Cree and Beaver Indian hunting grounds. Taking care not to be carried over the Chutes—as happened to two unfortunate American tourists some years ago—you might catch sight of an occasional buffalo browsing along the bank from the herd of 10,000 roaming through the buffalo preserve to the northward. Fort Chipewyan, at the end of your canoe journey, unless you intend to track and paddle up to Fort McMurray and the end-of-steel, you will find to be one of the most historic spots on your whole trip. Established originally in 1778, it became the center of exploration for the entire Northwest and the pivotal point of the long fur war and its numerous battles twixt Hudson's Bay men and Nor'Westers for the control of the Indians' fur trade of this vast region.

June and/or July would be as good a time as any for the trip as the water will be good, though in June the flies (mosquitoes) are inclined to be bothersome. I don't know exactly what your kayak is like, but if it's inclined to be flimsy I would recommend a Chestnut canoe, about 18 feet with plenty of freeboard, as these are used more than anything. The native dugout is clumsy, easily tipped, too slow, and could not be easily portaged over such portages for instance as the 12-mile Rocky Mountain Portage.

I trust that this information will help you, and I wish you a pleasant journey.

## A GREAT southpaw puncher.

Query:—What, in brief, was the career of Paul Berlenbach, the fighter?

—William P. Reese
Magna, Utah.

Reply by Jean V. Grombach:—Paul Berlenbach's career can be summarized as follows: A former amateur and Olympic wrestling champion, he took up boxing at the New York Athletic Club under Dan Hickey, and after a brilliant career in amateur and professional boxing won the light heavyweight championship of the world from Mike McTigue on May 30, 1925 at the Polo Grounds, New York City. Up until then he had only received two notable setbacks. He was defeated on points in the amateurs by Tom Kirby of Boston, and he was knocked out by Jack Delaney in his professional career in 1924. As light heavyweight champion, he fought Delaney again and defeated him in 15 rounds on points, although Delaney was not in condition for this fight. On July 26, 1926 the two men fought again and while Berlenbach greatly outweighed Delaney, Delaney was in excellent condition and defeated Berlenbach in convincing fashion. It is believed that except for friendship and sportsmanship, Delaney could have knocked out Berlenbach in the later rounds but "carried him." Berlenbach was a southpaw, a great puncher, and a great sportsman.

## TAXLESS Pacific paradise.—29.8S. 168.8 E.

Query:—I would like to obtain some information about Norfolk Island.

I have been a member of the U.S. Marine Corps for the past nineteen years, and as such I have travelled quite extensively in different parts of the world, mostly in the Far East. I read of Norfolk Island some time back and was quite impressed with the description of it, and ever since then the thought has occurred to me that it would be an ideal spot to retire when my time in the service is finished, i.e. in about one year. I judge that the cost of living would be cheaper on Norfolk than on the mainland of Australia, and imagine that a single man should be able to live comfortably on about a hundred dollars a month. What is your opinion?

Was Norfolk Island affected in any way by the war? Is that Yearbook of the Pacific Islands still published? If so, what is the address of the publisher? Is the population of Norfolk still on the decline as it was a few years back? To what can this be attributed? From my latest available source of information, I gather that Norfolk Island has become modernized, i.e. imported a lot of motor vehicles, introduced schools, and carries on quite a sizeable fruit export trade to Australia. I am not interested in any business ventures or employment, but plan rather to live a quiet comfortable life of retirement. Do you know of any individuals residing on Norfolk at the present time to whom I could write for further information about the island? And, finally, what would be the restrictions, if any, of a foreigner coming to Australia and subsequently to Norfolk in regard to passports, visas, etc.?

—T. Sgt. Franklin Boyer,
U.S. Navy School of Music,
Naval Receiving Station,
Washington, 25, D.C.

Reply by William McCreadie:—Norfolk is a fine island to live on, ideal climate and a good soil. Saturday is the big social day. In the middle of a lemon grove are a dozen

tennis courts and there half the populace assembles at noon. Good tennis is played, good food is eaten and the afternoon is generally followed by a dance in the nearby hall. On Sundays the island goes to church in the capital, Kingston. There is a good school. Cable station provides news of the world. There are long stretches of roads and over a hundred cars and trucks.

No taxes, but every adult male has to work fifteen days on the roads or public works. No licensed house; all liquor can be imported only by the Administration. No malaria; island now a popular health resort. Climate equable, ranging from 56 to 82°. Postal orders between Australia and island. Land is freehold and leasehold and small holdings popular. Island never popular with ships—no harbors, but planes steadily developing trade. Population gaining in numbers and prosperity. Many retired people have gone to live there as there is no income tax.

There is no difficulty about passports, etc. Passage by ship is not very easy, but Norfolk is easily accessible by plane. Houses are hard to get, but it's fairly easy to get land. Many boarding houses and if you wish to settle, I would recommend going to one of them until you look around. Living is no dearer than in Australia. Much foodstuff is grown and is fairly cheap. A big 'drome was completed in 1942 and to do this they cut down the miles-long lovely avenue of pine trees.

The yearbook is being printed again, but a few copies of the 1944 edition are still available at 15/-. Sorry, I don't know anybody on the island, but the Administration Office will answer any queries.

## BURROS for free.

Query:—I am looking for information concerning burros and wonder if you could help me out.

I read an article in a magazine stating that burros had become so plentiful in the Southwest that anyone could get one by paying the shipping charges. Is this correct?

—Donald H. Meekin
McLain Court
Williamstown, Mass.

Reply by J. W. Whiteaker:—Burros are not as plentiful now as they were a few years ago in the southwestern part of Texas. On the Rio Grande River from Del Rio as far down as Rio Grande City the country was so overrun with burros a few years ago that many of them were shot to rid the highways of the travel hazards. They were especially numerous in the Laredo and Eagle Pass sections where fields and garden spots were badly damaged by their eating and trampling of the produce. There are still a large number of these burros scattered over the southwestern sections and one could get all he wanted by being on the spot and taking them away—I am speaking of the wild ones and not those that are broken to the saddle and to the harness whose owners turn them out to graze on the open range.

I know of no one in any of these parts that would get burros for you. The best bet would be for you to look the situation over personally and hire some of the Mexican boys to get them for you—that is if you figure on taking them to the East for sale.

## SMALL-STREAM water power in the West.

Query:— I need some information of a varied and complex nature which has a bearing on mines and mining and the West in particular. If you do not have this information on tap, possibly you may tell me where I may obtain it.

One of these days I'd like to go to one of the Western states or more specifically the Southwest, to live. I want to locate in the foothills of the mountains on a stream where I can build a small dam and a waterwheel to develope a small amount of power. Now I had in mind an abandoned mine where water-power was once used to crush ore. Somewhere I have read or possibly seen in newsreels the old ore-crusher built of a large rotating rock on a rock table—all driven by water-power. I do believe that this was a Spanish Padre's invention—am I right? I had thought of Colorado (southern and eastern part), New Mexico, and Arizona. Some sort of a little valley opening south or southwest—isolation and distance does not matter too much. The idea of using the workings of an abandoned mine is that it could be leased or purchased reasonably along with an already built waterwheel.

Anything you have to offer in the way of advice as to feasibility of such a scheme will be appreciated as also will be anything you may tell me in regard to maps, Geological Survey sheets and where to get them, and likely sections that I might start looking. If I cannot find a location—that is, a used location and I had to start from scratch—a little prospecting might not be amiss, however the stream with the necessary fall and the right to place a dam across it is the main thing. I have the necessary knowledge for measuring the flow and head or fall and I would be capable of judging the power possibilities of a small stream.

—J. Buford Gooch
Selmer, Tennessee

Reply by Victor Shaw:—In general, I gather that your idea doesn't include development of stream water-power for any strictly mining purposes, merely to use the generated power for other purposes but following old mining practice. If right, I know of many streams in regions suggested, but can think of none at the moment where there are any abandoned mines. Of this more presently.

Incidentally, I think you refer to the ancient Spanish method of grinding ores—

chiefly gold, known as an "arrastre." This was not like the mill stones for grinding grain, but was a "patio process" in which heavy stones were dragged around an open cemented pit usually by horse or mule power. The animal hitched to a beam pivoted on a central post in the pit to which the heavy stones were attached. In many cases water power was used for this device, and I saw one in Alaska in which an ordinary water wheel with paddles on perimiter was mounted on its side to revolve on a central standard, and the flat stones of 40-50 lbs. were attached to the wheel spokes by chains or stout ropes. Water was brought from a small lake above by an 8-inch pipe which played upon the wheel's paddles and furnished more than enough power.

If you find some suitable place for what you have in mind, the same cheap method can be used, which is merely an adaptation of the ancient grain-grinding method applied to mining. I've seen an overshot water wheel used to actuate a 5-stamp mill, water brought by same 8 or 10-inch pipe from a lake—or could be an impounded pool on a small-sized creek that affords an adequate "head" for power—say 400-500 vertical feet. Pipe should be fitted with *reducing* nozzle at wheel, of course, and 10-12 miner's inches of water thus gives adequate power.

However, I doubt if even in our wilder areas any streams are available, where you could operate such a device without taking out a regulation "water right"; though not necessarily for mining purposes, for it could be the same for merely mechanical uses. This will involve the laws of any state governing its water control.

Southern Colo. is my old stamping ground for prospecting and mining, and you'll find plenty of such streams in the southern San Juan Mts., the southern canyons of the La Plata Mts., all in La Plata County, reached by U. S. 160 west from Durango. Also in San Juan Mts. in southeastern Mineral Co. around Wolf Creek Pass, also on U. S. 160. Or around Laveta Pass in northern Costilla Co. and western Huerfano Co., reached by U. S. 160 west from Walsenburg. The southeastern counties are deserts and have few mountains—and there water is doubtful which isn't already owned and used by surrounding ranchers.

I know many areas in Arizona which comply with your requirements, especially on the upper Hassayampa River in the Prescott region, and also the upper Verde River near Clarkdale, or the upper Agua Fria Creek near Mayer, all these in Yavapai County. There also is one excellent locality having several fair-sized streams flowing south into Salt River from the Four Peaks Mt. at south end of Mazatzal Range. This is wild virgin country and creeks may have placer. Nearest P. O. is Tortilla Flat reached from Phoenix via U. S. 80 to Apache Jct., then by State Hwy. 88 to Tortilla Flat on Canyon Lake, thence on to Roosevelt Dam.

## HIGH weight—low horse power.

Query:—Can you give me any information about two-cycle gasoline motors of low HP used by the U. S. Army or Navy Air Force?

If such motors are in use, who manufactures them?

If not used, why not?

Can you give me the names of manufacturers of such motors used to power civilian planes?

—G. Compton
Box 2883
Boise, Idaho

Reply by O. B. Myers:—I know of no case where a two-cycle engine has ever been used to power either military or naval aircraft, certainly not in recent years. For civilian planes of low horsepower, I know of no recent instance either.

The reason, broadly speaking, is a matter of weight. Two-cycle engines, by virtue of their design and operational cycle, run heavy; since the emphasis in aircraft design is always strongly on low weight per horsepower, they have been excluded from this field.

The intrinsic principle of two-cycle operation also means poor scavenging and low compression ratio; this lowers the efficiency of the engine, especially in the larger horsepowers.

The Air Forces in the field used a lot of auxiliary equipment; pumps, portable generators, air compressors and blowers, etc. Occasionally we ran across some of this stationary apparatus powered by two-cycle engines, although the instances were rare. When we did, they always seemed to be tough to start.

## SCOTCH from seeds—pine not whiskey.

Query:—Some time ago I read in ADVENTURE how to obtain the seed from pine cones. Now I have the seeds and I would like to know how to plant them. Do they need special care and how long does it take for the trees to grow to transplanting stage? We have very good planting ground around here on which pine seems to grow. The seed I have is Scotch pine. Or should I buy the seedlings from a nursery and then grow them?

—Ted S. Owens
R. F. D. No. 1
Monica, Pa.

Reply by A. H. Carhart:—Your question opens up a considerable field, but maybe I can get you started and point toward other sources where you can get assistance.

You *can* grow seedlings yourself from the seed you have. The seed bed should be well worked and of a good sandy loam. Make

*(Continued on page 142)*

# ASK ADVENTURE EXPERTS

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## SPORTS AND HOBBIES

**American Folklore and Legend:** *Songs, dances, regional customs; African survivals, religious sects: voodoo*—HAROLD PREECE, c/o *Adventure*.

**Archery**—EARL B. POWELL, c/o *Adventure*.

**Auto Racing**—WILLIAM CAMPBELL GAULT, 4828 N. Elkhart Ave., Milwaukee 11, Wis.

**Baseball**—FREDERICK LIEB, c/o *Adventure*.

**Basketball**—STANLEY CARHART, 99 Broad St., Mattawan, N. J.

**Big Game Hunting in North America:** *Guides and equipment*—A. H. CARHART, c/o *Adventure*.

**Boxing**—COL. JEAN V. GROMBACH, c/o *Adventure*.

**Camping**—PAUL M. FINE, Jonesboro, Tenn.

**Canoeing**—H. S. M. KEMP, 501 10th St., E., Prince Albert, Sask, Canada.

**Coins and Medals**—WILLIAM L. CLARK, American Numismatic Society, Broadway at 156th, N. Y. C.

**Dogs**—FREEMAN LLOYD, c/o *Adventure*.

**Fencing**—COL. JEAN V. GROMBACH, c/o *Adventure*.

**Fishing, Fresh water:** *Fly and bait casting; bait casting outfits; fishing trips*—JOHN ALDEN KNIGHT, 929 W 4th St., Williamsport, Penna.

**Fishing, Salt water:** *Bottom fishing, surf casting; trolling; equipment and locations*—C. BLACKBURN MILLER, c/o *Adventure*.

**Fly and Bait Casting Tournaments**—"CHIEF" STANWOOD, East Sullivan, Maine.

**Hiking**—DR. CLAUDE P. FORDYCE, c/o *Adventure*.

**Horses and Horsemanship**—JOHN RICHARD YOUNG, Timberlane Farm, R 2—Box 364, Racine, Wis.

**Motor Boating**—GERALD T. WHITE, Montville, N. J.

**Motorcycling:** *Regulations, mechanics, racing*—CHARLES M. DODGE, c/o *Adventure*.

**Rifles, Pistols, Revolvers:** *American and Foreign*—DONEGAN WIGGINS, 170 Liberty Rd., Salem, Oregon.

**Shotguns:** *American and foreign, wing shooting and field trials*—ROY S TINNEY, Brielle, N. J.

**Skiing**—WILLIAM C. CLAPP, The Mountain Book Shop, North Conway, N. H.

**Small Boating:** *Skiffs, outboard, small launch, river and lake cruising*—RAYMOND S. SPEARS, 1133½ Burin Ave., Inglewood, Calif.

**Swimming**—LOUIS DEB. HANDLEY, 115 West 11th St., N. Y., N. Y.

**Track**—JACKSON SCHOLZ, R. D. No. 1, Doylestown, Pa.

**Woodcraft**—PAUL M. FINE, Jonesboro, Tenn.

**Wrestling**—MURL E. THRUSH, New York, Athletic Club, 59th St. and 7th Ave., N. Y., N. Y.

## SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL SUBJECTS

**Anthropology:** *American, north of the Panama Canal; customs, dress, architecture, pottery and decorative arts, weapons and implements, fetishism, social divisions*—ARTHUR WOODWARD, Los Angeles Museum, Exposition Park, Los Angeles, Calif.

**Entomology:** *Insects and spiders; venomous and disease-carrying insects*—DR. S. W. FROST, 465 E. Foster Ave., State College, Penna.

**Forestry, North American:** *The U. S. Forestry Service, our national forests, conservation and use*—A. H. CARHART, c/o *Adventure*.

**Forestry, Tropical:** *Tropical forests and products*—WM. R. BARBOUR, care of U. S. Forest Service, Glenn Bldg., Atlanta, Ga

**Herpetology:** *Reptiles and amphibians*—CLIFFORD H. POPE, c/o *Adventure*.

**Mining, Prospecting, and Precious Stones:** *Anywhere in North America, Prospectors' outfitting; any mineral, metallic or non-metallic*—VICTOR SHAW, c/o *Adventure*.

**Photography:** *Outfitting, work in out-of-the way places; general information*—PAUL L. ANDERSON, 86 Washington St., East Orange, N. J.

**Radio:** *Telegraphy, telephony history; receiver construction, portable sets*—DONALD MCNICOL, c/o *Adventure.*

**Railroads:** *In the United States, Mexico and Canada*—R. T. NEWMAN, 701 N. Main St., Paris, Ill.

**Sawmilling:** HAPSBURG LIEBE, c/o *Adventure.*

**Taxidermy**—EDWARD B. LANG, 14 N. Burnett St., East Orange, N. J.

**Wilderafting and Trapping**—RAYMOND S. SPEARS, 11331 Burin Ave., Inglewood, Calif.

## MILITARY, NAVAL AND POLICE

**United States Army**—COL. R. G. EMERY, U.S.A. Ret., c/o *Adventure.*

**United States Coast Guard**—LIEUT. C. B. LEMON, U.S.C.G., Ret., Box 221, Equinunk, Wayne Co., Penna.

**United States Marine Corps**—MAJ. ROBERT H. RANKIN, U.S.M.C.R., c/o *Adventure.*

**United States Navy**—LIEUT. DURAND KIEFER, U.S.N., Ret., Box 74, Del Mar, Calif.

**Merchant Marine**—KERMIT W. SALYER, c/o *Adventure.*

**Military Aviation**—O. B. MYERS, c/o *Adventure.*

**Federal Investigation Activities**—*Secret Service, Immigration, Customs, Border Patrol, etc.*—FRANCIS H. BENT, c/o *Adventure.*

**The French Foreign Legion**—GEORGES SURDEZ, c/o *Adventure.*

**Royal Canadian Mounted Police**—H. S. M. KEMP, 501 10th St., E., Prince Albert, Sask., Canada.

**State Police**—FRANCIS H. BENT, c/o *Adventure.*

## GEOGRAPHICAL SUBJECTS

**★New Guinea**—L. P. B. ARMIT, c/o *Adventure.*

**★New Zealand, Cook Island, Samoa**—TOM L. MILLS, 27 Bowen St., Feilding, New Zealand.

**★Australia and Tasmania**—ALAN FOLEY, 243 Elizabeth St., Sydney, Australia.

**★South Sea Islands**—WILLIAM MCCREADIE, No. 1 Flat "Scarborough," 83 Sidney Rd., Manley, N. S. W., Australia.

**Hawaii, Christmas, Wake, Canton, Midway and Palmyra Islands**—CARL J. KUNZ, 211-3 Naska, Kahului, Maui, T.H.

**Africa, Part 1** ★*Libya, Morocco, Egypt, Tunis, Algeria, Anglo-Egyptian Sudan*—CAPT. H. W. EADES, 3808 West 26th Ave., Vancouver, B. C. **2** *Abyssinia, Italian Somaliland, British Somali Coast Protectorate, Eritrea, Uganda, Tanganyika, Kenya*—GORDON MACCRELAGH, c/o *Adventure.* **3** *Tripoli, Sahara caravans*—CAPTAIN BEVERLY-GIDDINGS, c/o *Adventure.* **4** *Bechuanaland, Southern Africa, Angola, Belgian Congo, Egyptian Sudan and French West Africa*—MAJOR S. L. GLENISTER, c/o *Adventure.* **5** ★*Cape Province, Orange Free State, Natal, Zululand, Transvaal, Rhodesia*—PETER FRANKLIN, Box 1491, Durban, Natal, So. Africa.

★**Madagascar**—RALPH LINTON, Dept. of Anthropology, Columbia University, N. Y., N. Y.

**Asia, Part 1** ★*Siam, Malay States, Straits Settlements, Java, Sumatra, Dutch East Indies, Ceylon*—V. B. WINDLE, Box 813, Rancho Santa Fe, Calif. **2** *Persia, Arabia*—CAPTAIN BEVERLY-GIDDINGS, c/o *Adventure.* **3** ★*Palestine*—CAPTAIN H. W. EADES, 3808 West 26th Ave., Vancouver, B. C. **4** ★*Afghanistan, Northern India, Kashmir, Khyber Pass*—ROLAND WILD, Savage Club, 1 Carlton House Terrace, London, S.W.1, England.

**Europe, Part 1** ★*The British Isles*—THOMAS BOWEN PARTINGTON, Constitutional Club, Northumberland Ave., London, W. C. 2, England.

**South America, Part 1** *Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia and Chile*—EDGAR YOUNG, c/o *Adventure.* **2** ★*Argentina*—ALLISON WILLIAMS BUNKLEY, c/o *Adventure.* **3** ★*Brazil*—ARTHUR J. BURKS, c/o Alto Tapajos, Rua Gaspar Viana 18, Belem, Para, Brazil.

**West Indies**—JOHN B. LEFFINGWELL, c/o *Adventure.*

**Baffinland and Greenland**—VICTOR SHAW, c/o *Adventure.*

**Mexico, Part 1** *Northern Border States*—J. W. WHITEAKER, 2903 San Gabriel St., Austin, Tex. **2** *Quintana Roo, Yucatan, Campeche*—CAPTAIN W. RUSSELL SHEETS, c/o *Adventure.* **3** ★*West Coast beginning with State of Sinaloa; Central and Southern Mexico, including Tabasco and Chiapas*—WALLACE MONTGOMERY, Club Americano, Bolivar 31, Mexico, D.F.

**Canada, Part 1** ★*Southeastern Quebec*—WILLIAM MACMILLAN, 89 Laurentide Ave., Quebec, Canada. **2** *Ottawa Valley and Southeastern Ontario*—HARRY M. MOORE, 579 Isabella, Pembroke, Ont., Canada. **3** ★*Georgian Bay and Southern Ontario; National Parks Camping*—A. D. L. ROBINSON, 103 Wembly Rd., Toronto, Ont., Canada. **4** ★*Northern Saskatchewan; Indian life and language, hunting, trapping*—H. S. M. KEMP, 501 10th St. E., Prince Albert, Sask., Canada. **5** ★*Yukon, British Columbia, Northwest Territories, Alberta, Western Arctic*—PHILIP H. GODSELL, F.R.G.S., General Delivery, Airdrie, Alberta, Canada.

**Alaska**—FRANK RICHARDSON PIERCE, c/o *Adventure.*

**Western U. S., Part 1** *Pacific Coast States*—FRANK WINCH, c/o *Adventure.* **2** *New Mexico; Indians, etc.*—H. F. ROBINSON, 1321 E. Tijeras Ave., Albuquerque, New Mexico. **3** *Nevada, Montana and Northern Rockies*—FRED W. EGELSTON, P. O. Box 297, Elko, Nev. **4** *Idaho and environs*—R. T. NEWMAN, 701 N. Main St., Paris, Ill. **5** *Arizona, Utah*—C. C. ANDERSON, c/o *Arizona Stockman*, Arizona Title Bldg., Phoenix, Ariz. **6** *Texas, Oklahoma*—J. W. WHITEAKER, 2903 San Gabriel St., Austin, Tex.

**Middle Western U. S.**—*Lower Mississippi from St. Louis down, Louisiana Swamps, St. Francis, Arkansas Bottom*—RAYMOND S. SPEARS, 11331 Burin Ave., Inglewood, Calif.

**Eastern U. S. Part 1** *Maine*—"CHIEF" STANWOOD, East Sullivan, Me. **2** *Vt., N. H., Conn., R. I., Mass.*—HOWARD R. VOIGHT, P. O. Box 716, Woodmont, Conn. **3** *Adirondacks, New York*—RAYMOND S. SPEARS, 11331 Burin Ave., Inglewood, Calif. **4** *Ala., Tenn., Miss., N. C., S. C., Fla., Ga.*—HAPSBURG, LIEBE, c/o *Adventure.* **5** *The Great Smokies and Appalachian Mountains south of Virginia*—PAUL M. FINK, Jonesboro, Tenn.

*(Continued from page 6)*

this bother over less than seven thousand people! Why, we hear of seven hundred thousand exiles (though to be sure we call them "displaced persons") without missing a meal!

Most of us haven't seen them, of course; as Sozzini saw the *"bocche disutili"* of his day.

Perhaps that's what makes the difference.

And to televise them—even if it were technically possible now—would definitely put people off buying breakfast foods.

So perhaps Caradosso wasn't so bad after all—at any rate, he had a heart; at least for women.

AND Robinson MacLean continuing his supplementary notations on customs and conditions of living in The Land of the Conquering Lion of Judah as "The Devil's Left Tusk" races along, further documents his novel by saying—

There must be thousands of people living who have actually crossed the Abbaye—the Blue Nile—between Addis Ababa and Debra Markos, but the business of starting out to cross it is a standing joke around the Ethiopian capital.

In the six months I was there I talked to more than a dozen people who had set out gaily behind their caravans, and limped home a week or more later.

"Everything was going fine," they'd say, "until we got to the Blue Nile. Then . . . "

Sometimes the boat was broken. Sometimes they tried it on a straw raft and lost a couple of mules. Sometimes the boatmen were drunk and didn't want to interrupt their party until they ran out of tedj. Sometimes there'd been a fresh flood, and sometimes the negadis, driving the mules, balked for any one of a dozen other reasons.

I wouldn't want to discourage any one from starting to cross to the elephant country beyond. But they might bear in mind that if they run into one of the usual difficulties there's a telephone at the village called Quo Hatsiyon, on the Addis Ababa side, so they can call their friends to say they're coming back.

Anyone doubting that Ethiopian cookery is more incendiary than Mexican is welcome to sample the product of either of the two genuine recipes below:

(1) Watt: Into a hot saucepan put three heaping tablespoons of ground capsicum peppers, three of butter, six minced onions, one teaspoon salt, half teaspoon of allspice and two cups of water. Cook ten minutes, then add two cups of minced meat. Cook five minutes.

(2) Shurro: In an earthen pot put three heaping tablespoons of ground capsicums (chile powder will do fine), three minced onions, allspice, salt, two large tablespoons of butter and three heaping tablespoons of ground pea-meal. Stir briskly on the fire for five minutes, then add three cups of water and cook for fifteen minutes.

Anyone rash enough to try either watt or shurro will be in a mood to appreciate the little song the Ethiopians sing when the rains are over and spring begins. "Throw out the shurro and bring in the cabbage, spring is here."

Regarding the Barea (the word means "slave")—the wild tribesmen described in the story—it might be well to remember that the League of Nations helped to increase their numbers considerably. There was slavery in Ethiopia prior to its acceptance into the League, but the condition was imposed on Ethiopia that all slaves must be freed. This suited almost everyone except thousands of the slaves, who had a better living slaving than they could earn by themselves. The Emperor sent several military expeditions through the provinces to free these recalcitrant slaves by force. Many of them took to the woods and turned into shifta—bandits. I am certain that any able-bodied and two-gunned Texan, who wanted to make the James boys look like pikers, and could stand the living conditions, could rake up enough cutthroat followers through northwestern Ethiopia to fill a football stadium. Until Selassie caught him.

ALEC HUDSON, who gives us "Periscope Patrol" on page 94 this month, has been absent since November 1940 when his "A Porpoise with a Purpose" appeared. Plenty can happen in any given eight-year interval—and we suspected that more than plenty had happened to Hudson in that particular period, times being what they were. There was "a war on"—remember? We asked Hudson, who graduated from the Submarine School at New London, Conn. in 1924 and was an officer in the underseas craft till he was retired for physical disability in '36, to catch us up on his activities during the war years, for we knew he'd gone back into the service. Here's what he wrote us—

From June 1941 to July 1946 I was again on active duty in the Navy. I served in the Joint Intelligence Center, Pacific Ocean Areas, and on Admiral Nimitz's staff at Pearl Harbor. My job was in intelligence; I had daily contact with the Submarine Force but I never went to sea in a submarine during the war. For one thing, I was not physically qualified for sea duty. After the war I was on the staff of Commander Submarine Force as historian in charge of preparation of the Operational History of the Submarine Force. Since leaving the Navy I have returned to

the University of Hawaii as Professor of Engineering and Mathematics.

A distinguished officer, a distinguished writer, we are delighted to have Alec Hudson back with us once more and sincerely hope we won't have to wait another eight years for another of his fine, authentic yarns of the men who go down under the sea in ships.

CHARLES EDWARD CHAPEL, whose "Handguns of Glory" appears on page 117 this month, was born in Manchester, Iowa, in 1904. He was educated at the State University of Iowa, Missouri University, and the U. S. Naval Academy. In 1926 he was commissioned in the U. S. Marine Corps, shortly promoted to First Lieutenant, and honorably retired for service-connected injuries in 1937, after receiving medals for his part in the Nicaragua and China campaigns. During World War II he organized and managed the training of thousands of aviation pilots and mechanics for the Army and Navy and was a producer of motion picture training films for the Army Air Forces. At present, he is Chief of Research and Development for Northrop Aircraft, Inc. He is the author of many books on guns and gun collecting, among which are "Gun Care and Repair," "Gun Collecting," and "The Gun Collector's Handbook of Values." Of the genesis and publication of the latter volume Mr. Chapel tells the following anecdote—

Less than three months after "Gun Collecting" appeared, I received more than two thousand letters from people, who wanted to know the value of arms they owned or wished to buy. At first I tried to answer each of them, but the questions required such detailed replies that I finally sent a form letter to everyone and told them that if they would send a down payment of a dollar on the purchase of a book which was not yet written, or even outlined, I would write, publish, and deliver a text describing and giving current market values for more than two thousand firearms popular with collectors, and that I would provide at least five hundred photographs of such guns.

The money started coming in fast, and with it came two U.S. Post Office Inspectors and an agent of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, all three suspecting a swindle. They asked many questions, then left their own deposits for the unwritten book, together with personal as well as official threats of what would happen if it turned out to be a mail fraud.

Fortunately, more than enough money came to pay the printer and the binder. Two months after I had mailed the first announcement, the book was written, and in August, 1940, it was published. Two thousand copies were bought by private collectors, including my three federal investigator friends. Five hundred were sold to libraries, museums and antique dealers, and curiously enough, nearly five hundred were bought by pawnbrokers and auctioneers. The edition sold out and soon became a book collector's item, retailing for several times its original price. That must have set some kind of record because most books which are published by the authors are complete flops financially.

"Handguns of Glory" is a companion piece to "Guns of Glory" which we published some years ago and which told in detail of the martial shoulder arms of American military history. Mr. Chapel has been working all this time collecting and collating the material on martial handguns which he presents this month and assures us that the article is as definitive as its predecessor piece. We have had it checked by other experts who agree that it is an authoritative job and something which every gun collector and hobbyist will want to file in his archives for reference purposes.

CARL J. KUNZ, our *Ask Adventure* expert on Hawaii and other Pacific islands, writes from Maui, T.H., where he's finally settled after "too many years on the mainland"—

It's only an island some 45 miles long and 20 miles wide, but it's Paradise! Who could ask for more?

I'm back home to stay. The poi is good, the roast pig is better, and I'd get very homesick if I couldn't see the old volcano twice a day. The family joined me in March and have become true islanders, having developed a taste for raw fish.

A ten-minute walk to the beach where surf-fishing is excellent and the bathing is not bad. Wild boar within a five-minute walk, but they're scheduled for the *imu* (the pit) as soon as I get time to do some hunting. It's surprising how busy a man can become. Special correspondent for two island bi-weeklies and "mayor" of a community. Also do a monthly stint for a Federal agency house-organ. I almost forgot the job as recreation director for the community. I'm a walking delegate of the local C. of C. Hope to do some articles in the near future.

And we hope to have a chance to see

'em. Sounds like a swell spot you've picked to hibernate, pal. Tell us more.

IN *Ask Adventure* last June there was a query from C. J. Floyd of Alice, Texas about turkey callers made from the wing-bone of a turkey. Paul M. Fink, one of our outdoor experts, answered to the best of his ability, but never having actually seen such a caller couldn't describe it with specific exactitude. This month we are indebted to J. C. Read of Rocky Mount, N. C. for some additional information on the subject—

Back in 1928 I was on a hunting trip in Louisa County, Va. and during a quail hunt my dog flushed a large gobbler, and the following morning one of the men in the party went back and called him up, and got him. The caller used was made from the large bone in the middle joint of a turkey wing, a length of rubber tubing about 12 inches long, and the tip of a cow's horn, about three inches long. The bone was used as the mouth-piece, the rubber tube was used to connect the bone with the cow's horn, and of course, the horn was used megaphone-fashion to amplify the sound. Not being much of a turkey hunter, I did not pay too much attention to the caller, but I do remember hearing this man say that he had found it much superior to any other type of caller and he had killed many turkeys through using it. I heard the caller used several times and, to me, it seemed very realistic, but then, I am no turkey and would likely be easier fooled than the gobbler. It is my recollection that the rubber tubing was about 3/8ths of an inch inside diameter, and the cow-horn tip was bored through the small end to allow passage of sound into the larger part of the horn.

Should you wish to write the man who made the caller mentioned above, he is Charles Wood, of Louisa, Va.

—J. C. Read,
415 Sunset Ave.,
Rocky Mount, N. C.

Our *Ask Adventure* experts have no pretensions to infallibility and do get stumped on occasion—though not often. When they have difficulty coming up with the right answer, or can only manage part of an answer, they are always glad, as are we, when some reader such as Brother Read, in friendly *Camp-Fire* fashion can help to set the record straight. Many thanks from all of us for the above lines and may turkey-hunter Floyd's wing-caller never leave him minus a bird for Thanksgiving!

WHEN a couple of army officers get involved in a discussion over the technicalities of service rules and regulations and the red tape that can or can't be cut under any given situation we must respectfully bow out. However, we give you the following, for what they are worth and a non-service layman's opinion that the colonel in the case seems to have it over the major when the final score is toted up.

Dear Sirs:

"Thunder in the North" in the April, 1948, ADVENTURE was quite interesting, except for one glaring error. It is not often I contradict military experts' writings, but the *faux pas* whereby the character, Colonel McQueen pulled his rank was just too much.

According to the story, subject officer had been out of the army for almost a year when he was recalled to active duty. However, he passed himself off, on an army colonel at that, as having the same date of rank, December '43, after almost one year inactive duty. Now, army recruits, that is almost any recruit, knows that if an officer's date of rank is December, '43, he is off active duty for one year. Then his date of rank upon being recalled to active duty would be December, '44.

Yours for more and earlier dates of rank for AF officers.

—Chris Solberg
Major, GSC
G-1, 25th Division
A.P.O. 25, San Francisco, Cal.

We promptly forwarded Major Solberg's letter along to Colonel Emery, the author of "Thunder in the North," and here's what the colonel replied—

My dear Major:

Thank you for your interest in the ADVENTURE story.

As to the error you indicate, I'm afraid I can't meet you on the issue of what any recruit might or might not know. It is traditional that recruit attitudes and capacities lie peculiarly within the province of G-1. I do not feel qualified to invade it.

On the matter of the relative seniority of the two colonels in my story, Frayne and McQueen, I could give you the straight answer that I did not visualize them as the type to know the latest "word" on dates of rank. In common with most men of similar rank and responsibility, they would have weightier things on their minds. Right or wrong, the matter wouldn't bother them much. The average regular I have known, of senior rank, couldn't tell you his own date, off-hand.

Or I could say that the usual reader wouldn't, I am sure, be interested in a detailed discussion of all the factors which

McQueen and Frayne took into consideration while solving the problem.

However, your criticism was pointed and you deserve a technical explanation. The pertinent Army Regulation is C 4 to AR 600-15, 27 Mar 1947, Par. 4: *"Precedence or relative rank among officers of same grade:*

"f. Army Air Force Officers . . . take rank in the grade to which appointed . . . *from the date stated in their respective commissions in such grades."*

As you must be aware, there is nothing to prevent the President, under advice from the Chief, AAF, from giving any officer any date of rank he chooses, or is asked to do by the said C/S, AAF. He could date it back to the flood, if he so wished. The same point is, I believe, covered by AW 119.

Sincerely yours,

—Guy Emery, O-18247,
Colonel, USA, Ret.

Colonel Emery doubles in brass (no pun intended!) as our *Ask Adventure* expert on military matters as well as a fiction writer, you'll recall. Anybody else want to pull their rank now and chime in on the above argument?

AND to accompany his last batch of *Ask Adventure* questions and answers Colonel Emery attaches the following query of his own. He writes—

I have just been reading the late Albert Richard Wetjen's article on Australia's rabbit scourge. It has occurred to me to wonder why the endemic disease which seems to kill off most of the rabbits in any given locality on this continent every seven years or so evidently does not affect the breed in Australia. Possibly someone who knows may tell me that that is not scientifically correct in this country, either. I have always heard that it was true and certainly in the more prolific rabbit producing areas where I lived . . . Minnesota, Montana, Central Alaska . . . they have disappeared every so often. All but disappeared.

It is to be deeply regretted that Mr. Wetjen cannot answer, himself. Shark Gotch and the rest of the lusty company which he put upon the stage will not be soon forgotten nor replaced. But his own Fiddler's Green must have had the spit turning and the bung started for him.

And perhaps someone else knows the answer about the rabbits. If it should be that the Australian government does not, we'll suggest that they import a few more furry coals in the shape of some breeding pairs from the Bitter Root or the Kenai who are susceptible and can infect the rest.

We haven't any rabbit expert and it takes almost as long to get a reply from our staffmen in Australia as it will to get this into print. Can any knowledgeable reader come up with the answer? We'd like to know, too.

A SKEPTICAL reader writes in questioning certain technical details which cropped up in Carl D. Lane's recent serial laid against the early days of Ohio River steamboating. Witness—

The recently concluded serial "Prairie Paddles" was very interesting, but there are points which might puzzle the reader, and, which undoubtedly the writer of said tale can clear up.

One might judge that anvils were carried on the old steamboats for hanging onto the safety valve. Is this a fact? Why couldn't the weight have been moved out a few notches on the lever of the safety valve—if steamboat boiler safety valves were differently constructed than stationary boiler. A seventy-five or one-hundred-pound anvil would have wrecked the mechanism of the stationary boiler safety valve of that time.

"The boiler doors clanged and the steam lines, red hot, scorched adjacent woodwork until they required wetting down by the fire detail." Is it possible that steam passing through pipes could cause them to become red, or is this just a figure of speech. I have seen steam, high pressure 225 pounds, pipes of iron and copper and in the dark, yet they never turned red. Is it possible?

"Close your safety valves— I want two hundred pounds pressure!"

"She'll blow boilers at one-eighty, Butler!"

"Two hundred," Haines growled. "I've got to lift her fifteen feet next time."

Did marine boilers carry one hundred and eighty pounds in those days? In 1890 I saw a stationary boiler carrying seventy-five pounds, a man of about sixty and familiar with boilers, stated, "I hear they are now making boilers which carry one hundred pounds!" This indicated something remarkable at that time. But if they carry one hundred and eighty pounds, the demanded twenty pounds excess could account for many of the "mysterious" marine boiler explosions.

Would be pleased to learn the facts; something new again.

—Glenn Alvin.
Flushing, N. Y.

We passed the above along to Mr. Lane and here's what the author of "Prairie Paddles" answers—

No; anvils were not carried for the express purpose of hanging on the safety valve arms of steamboat boilers—but along with a sack of wrenches, the regular globe weight and anything handy seems to have been used for "high pressure." See *Mississippi Steamboatin'* by Quick. Anvils, by the way,

were regular steamboat equipment—and they were not necessarily "seventy five to one hundred pounds."

Yes; steam lines, especially copper lines, become red under high temperature and pressure. There are numerous instances of steamlines igniting adjacent woodwork. Again read Quick . . . or J. H. Morrison's *History of American Steam Navigation.*

Morrison also states, under his chapter on Western Rivers, that pilots sometimes called for 200 pounds pressure when in a tough spot—as Haines Butler was. Engines ran at 130 to 160 designed boiler pressure as far back as 1838. But you are quite right in laying the many steamboat disasters to boiler failures. Until the Steamboat Inspection Service took over, about 1860, any boiler could be and was used without pressure tests or plate tests. Any steamboat history reveals the shocking loss of life from exploded boilers in the early days.

I'm sorry that I can't take solemn oath to my facts—but I do feel justified in using them since I have gone carefully into all the source material available; that's all we can do in this steamboatless age.

Sincerely,
—Carl D. Lane

Carl D. Lane, you will recall, is the author of "American Paddle Steamships," considered to be the definitive volume on early steamboating in America. He has steeped himself in the history and lore of the paddle-wheelers and is recognized almost as a "court of last appeal" when any question arises on the subject. You will all be interested, we know, in looking forward to his work-in-progress, a novel of the first steamboat voyage down the Mississippi to New Orleans which will be serialized in these pages prior to book publication early next year. Nicholas Roosevelt, who backed the experimental voyage, Aaron Burr, the fabulous and tragic Blennerhasset—all are characters in the tale—and every Lane and paddle-boat fan (which means the same thing, of course!), as well as every other lover of red-blooded, exciting, adventure has a treat in the offing.

WE THOUGHT you'd be interested, as we were, in the following comments from the engine-room to the radio shack anent a short sea story we published in our April issue—

Ethan Grant's "Mr. Third Engineer" is a well-written story but falls short of being based on true facts, so I am waiting to see how many Deck & Engine Officers will jump on it. There should be quite a few, since ADVENTURE can be found on most ships, and seamen have plenty of time to write during a voyage.

I have sailed with skippers that appeared "weak-kneed" to me, with mates that I deemed "lunkheads" and with "doddering" chiefs, but that was only my personal opinion, so was of no particular value. But I have never found all of them in one group, since the management of steamship companies usually are well informed as to the abilities of their officers, so would not allow such conditions.

Radio operators have no duties that are important in the routine management of a ship, being merely skilled technicians needed to maintain communication with shore, or other ship stations as required. While those duties are too important for me to attempt to belittle radio operators, they require no previous ship experience, so operators are subject to little scrutiny when joining a ship and given little thought while aboard, unless they prove to be "trouble makers."

After having sailed with at least a dozen "sparks" who did not know their way around a ship when first joining up, you can see why I was quite amused to read about a "weak-kneed" skipper who was not interested in important things, getting excited about who or what the new "radio" was. Like cooks, machinists, electricians, etc., radio operators can acquire the required experience to start working at their trades aboard ship before having ship experience.

In regard to loading petroleum products, the shore officials would see that Government Regulations covering such cargo was complied with, so "naphtha" would be "loaded away from the boilers and other combustible cargo." And they would be quite certain that the "steam smothering" system was in operating condition so that steam could be turned into any cargo hold or coal bunker to extinguish a fire WITHOUT OPENING ANY HATCHES.

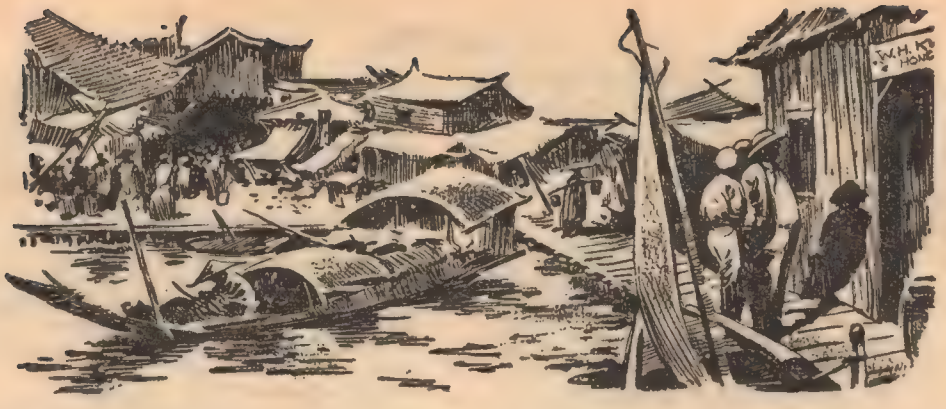
In regard to loose funnel stays, will say that a ship under way has hot gases in the funnel so that the funnel expands and TIGHTENS the stays.

And to have a third assistant expecting to be called for repairs to a steering engine is a real hot one, when that job is up to the first, with the chief usually checking it at least once each day, PERSONALLY.

This is not a "beef" since the story was amusing, and that is why I buy the magazine. In fact, it is one of the few stories that I read a second time, just because it was EXTRA amusing to see how "sparks" got everything all fouled up. And expecting to see some comments in *Camp-Fire* will give me something to look forward to in the next few issues. So Grant gave me more than my money's worth, even if he will get a roasting.

My license reads "Chief Engineer of Ocean Steam Vessels", issue No. 4-8, which means the fourth issue as chief and the eighth issue of all grades, so I am not too

*(Continued on page 141)*



# THE TRAIL AHEAD

No piano was ever in tune in Bandjermasin, Dutch Borneo, or anywhere else in the great fungus and monsoon belt that runs from the Deccan Peninsula to Thursday Island. Dampness and fungus do things to piano wire, as "Oakleg" McQuarrie discovered when he sat down to play a Chopin prelude in that waterfront bar where the babble of Dutch and Portuguese and Chinese and English dinned out the creak of the four-bladed punkahs suspended from the ceiling. And they do things to the nerves of men, as well as piano strings, he found when Captain Jaske bought him a *stengah* and proceeded to tell him about the Sword of Malipur.

## "JEWEL OF THE JAVA SEA"

### By Dan Cushman

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"A Matter of Judgment" by Standby introduces a salty new author from Down Under who ships us aboard the *Moonbah*—out of Cairns for the Tonga Islands and points east—under a skipper who found that errors in navigation can't be corrected with a sarcastic retort or genial bluff to cover a lack of know-how. . . . "The Mechanization of Charley Hoe Handle" by Jim Kjelgaard is another uproarious skirmish in the rebellion of your favorite poacher against game-law enforcement in general and Warden Horse Jenkins in particular. . . . "A Kepi for France" by Georges Surdez is an exciting yarn of the underground in the last World War. . . . Tales of Alaska by Frank Richardson Pierce—of the rattlesnake hunters of the Deep South piney woods by William Fuller—of the Australian axemen who lumber the gum forests in the Victorian back-of-beyond by Ian Lasry. . . . Plus gripping fact stories of underwater salvage operations, the boom days of Central American oil development—the men who pushed the transcontinental roads of steel across the Canadian wilderness. . . . The smashing conclusion of Robinson MacLean's "The Devil's Left Tusk". . . . And an unusual assortment of departmental features and outdoor information such as you can expect to find each month only in—

**ON SALE SEPTEMBER 10th**

*(Continued from page 139)*

far from the "doddering chief" condition that "Sparks" writes of.

—L. Skellenger,
7648 South Tacoma Way,
Tacoma 9, Washington.

Here is "Sparks" Grant's reply—

Dear Chief:

Come on up to the radio shack and let's talk this "Mr. Third Engineer" thing over. Chief engineers and I have always got along. Among them were some of the finest men I've ever known—even those who were doddering, and since my sea career dates back to 1917, I can tell you we did have them occasionally.

In the age-old argument between the bridge and the engine-room, I've always stood neutral. Such a stand served me well, for I happen to have had a rather happy career, with almost no trouble with any of the many, many officers with whom I sailed. I like the sea and I like seafarers. Not many persons who've never gone to sea either understand or sympathize with their problems, which are sometimes many and hard.

Your argument that no ship would likely sign all lunkheads, weak-knees and a doddering chief is so much bilge. Maybe not today, but back then. . . Were you sailing just after World War I, when certain cheap steamship companies wouldn't sign a deck officer or an engineer unless he'd been blackballed by the U. S. Shipping Board, when they could get such men for whatever they wanted to pay and feel reasonably sure they'd either stick or starve?

An example: On a freighter headed south along the coast of France, at high noon, with the skipper and three mates on the bridge, we piled up against the Penmarche Pointe lighthouse! Don't ask me why, but it happened. Prior to that, on the same ship, running coastwise in clear weather, we steamed four hours beyond our destination and had to turn about!

Your argument concerning the loading of naphtha "away from the boilers" is no doubt true today, but it has not always been; otherwise, I never could have written the story, for that angle was based on fact, and as witness I'll leave it to many another old-timer who sailed on the New York-Montevideo run in the early 20's.

Loose funnel stays? Why, Chief, I've seen them fall off the stack! And once we anchored at Constantinople with three of them lying on the boatdeck. Where the hell you been, sir? And you say a third assistant is never expected "to be called for repairs to the steering engine." Well, if you re-read the story I think you'll have to agree that Luke Sturdy wasn't "called;" he just strode aft and fixed it. And that was based on an actual occurrence, except that it wasn't an engineer, but an A.B.! It turned out that the old boy had worked in the factory where the gol-darned thing was built.


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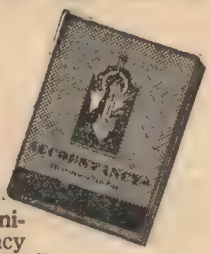

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Furthermore, I'll bet you a beer not very many seafarers, as you predict, will agree with you that I "got everything fouled up" in the story. As a matter of fact, I think most of them, particularly the oldtimers, will agree that I did know what I was writing about.

Sorry, but you apparently missed the whole point. Open your Webster's and take a good look at the definition of the word "fiction." Honestly now, Chief, haven't you known a few junior engineers who knew everything and who wanted to burn the world up in their rush to become chiefs? Actually, if you knew the meaning of the word "fiction," and I didn't happen to treasure the memories of so many likable chiefs I knew, I'd have simply written you a very brief reply, probably stating: "Now look, Chief, those things didn't happen in *your* merchant marine. They happened in *my* story, so go soak your head!"

And they couldn't have happened even there without a combination of unusual incidents involving naphtha, a bunker fire, an energetic young third assistant, a lunkhead mate, a weak-kneed skipper and a doddering old chief engineer—which I certainly hope you aren't!

Sincerely,
Ethan Grant.

Anybody else want to pour a little fuel on troubled waters or spark the naphtha already floating there?—K.S.W.

# ASK ADVENTURE

*(Continued from page 132)*

this in the form of a rectangular bed for better handling. It would be helpful to put your last inch of top soil through at least a ¼ inch screen to take out the hard lumps and stony particles.

Lay a board across the top after you have smoothed the bed down so the top is uniformly flat and as nearly level as you can make it, and draw lines, from 8 to 12 inches apart, using the board edge as a guide, planting each of these little lines before you shift the board to the next one. Standing on the board you will not pack the soil so tightly. You can make your little furrows uniform if you will take a lath, sharpen a piece of it that is about a foot long, and then notch the side so the point of the lath will extend down below the board about a half inch, and by hooking the notch over the side of the board, you'll get a uniform depth to the little furrow.

Plant the seed about ¾ of an inch apart. After a row is planted, smooth back the earth that has been "plowed out" by your

lath marker, and move on to the next. When the bed is entirely finished, sift a layer of not over ⅛ inch of sand over the top to keep the surface from baking and also to reduce the chances of what is known as "damping off" of the seedlings.

Damping off is a fungus condition, that starts growing just at the surface of the ground, when moist and somewhat humid conditions exist, and this fungus attacks the tender shoots of the seedlings, killing the little plants. There are antiseptics you can use to kill the fungus. In the first place, you may drench the sand you will put on the surface with boiling water, to sterlize it, leaving it dry before you put it on. That is a preventative. There are solutions of such antiseptics as potassium permangenate and bi-chloride of mercury, sprinkled on the beds in a very dilute solution, that will keep fungus down and not injure the seedlings. There are commercial products, available at seed stores, (Semesan being one of the best known) that will do this job, and instructions go with the packages. The angle of keeping the fungus down is one of the jobs to be done if you are to get your seedlings through to transplanting size.

The other major danger you'll have to guard against, is small wildlife getting at the beds. Make a frame that is large enough to fit over the bed, and with corner posts that will be long enough to have the top of the frame about 12 to 18 inches above the seedlings. This should be covered with mesh wire with apertures not over ¼ inch big. This is to prevent little rodents, such as field mice, from getting at the seeds in the first place, and eating the tender shoots in the second. The screen top keeps birds from coming in and either working on seed or shoot or using your seedling bed as a dusting place.

Keep the beds moist, using a fine, light spray, but don't waterlog them. If you get a good germination and nothing happens to blight the tender seedlings, you should have little plants an inch or two high by the end of the year. You can give them a very light winter protection of loose straw, under the "cage" the first winter, and then line them out 6 inches or so apart in the first transplanting, the second year. It will take four to six years to get a tree up toward a foot high unless you have exceptional growth; that time from seed gathering and planting. You may leave them in the seedling beds two years without too much crowding.

You probably can find a copy of *The Nursery Book* by L. H. Bailey in your library to give you further information, and you can write the U. S. Forest Service, Information Division, Washington, D. C. for bulletins which may be helpful. If you are going into a small evergreen nursery development, I'd suggest that you get some varieties that are a little more valuable than Scotch pine, since it is not one of the trees that gets in the upper brackets in ornamental stock. If you're growing for a windbrake or woodlot, that's fine.

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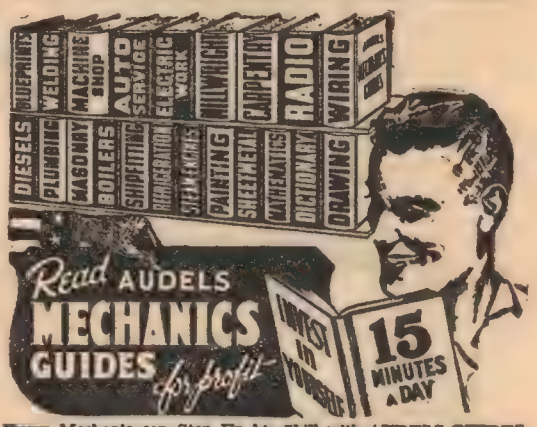


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# LOST TRAILS

NOTE: We offer this department to readers who wish to get in touch again with friends or acquaintances separated by years or chance Give your own name and full address. Please notify *Adventure* immediately should you establish contact with the person you are seeking. Space permitting, each inquiry addressed to *Lost Trails* will be run in three consecutive issues. Requests by and concerning women are declined as not considered effective in a magazine published for men. *Adventure* also will decline any notice that may not seem a sincere effort to recover an old friendship, or that may not seem suitable to the editors for any other reason. No charge is made for publication of notices.

Anyone knowing the whereabouts of Arthur R. Robbins, 37 years old, recently in the U.S. Army, and who was last heard from December, 1947, in Arlington, Virginia, please write Walter J. Kennedy, P.O. Box 869, St. John's, Newfoundland. Robbins' forte is music and at one time he played guitar with Eddie Arnold. Hung out in Washington, D.C.

I wish to gather any information about my old buddy, Walter G. Chandler, nicknamed "Cow-Creek." He was born in Cow Creek, Florida, is about 57 years old, 5'6", black hair and eyes. Served two hitches in the 160th C.A.C., mostly at Fort Stevens, Ore. Last heard of at Camp Pike, Ark., 1918-1919. He once belonged to the Knights of Pythias. Contact M. C. Breckinridge, 118-N. Wilson Way, Stockton, Calif.

I would like to locate Thomas A. Jones, last heard of in Gunnison, Colorado, in 1934. He lived in Gary, Indiana in 1933 and part of '34. He was a body and fender man and worked for Sharps Garage in Indiana and Hartman's Garage in Montrose, Colo. Pleas get in touch with D. G. Johnson, 735 Custer Ave., Billings, Mont.

I would like to hear from anyone knowing the whereabouts of John Emil Gabrielson, born in Minnesota 47 years ago. He was last heard from in Roman, Montana in 1934, but has been reported as being in Stockton, Calif., in 1940. He is slim, has brown hair, blue eyes, and has a thumb missing on the right hand. Any information concerning him will be greately appreciated by his brother, Ervin Gabrielson, 28 Randall St., Cortland, N. Y.

I would like to locate Phillip C. Steed, last heard from in or around Chicago, Ill. If he or person knowing his address reads this, write Leonard Steed, Talbotton, Ga.

*(Continued from page 61)*

Quinto tossed the pack back and it hit my chest and fell limply beneath the table.

I pushed my chair back to retrieve the cigarettes. As I straightened up there occurred one of those moments so completely in focus, yet so ramified the senses fail to register it instantly. My eyes had dragged up something from beneath the table, an after-glance, the stark image of a pair of low-cut English boots without feet in them. I was suddenly unnerved. The impression of a gold tradesman's stamp had been in the lining of the shoes —a Unicorn.

For an imponderable moment the entire bar seemed to stagger; the walls seemed to waver; Chinese faces blinked oddly around me. Good Lord! Trend's shoes! I fought back the urge to look beneath the table again. I didn't dare. I stared at Wu and Quinto. Perhaps a look of pinched feet, now relieved, would show in a face.

Quinto was watching me with a smile that felt instantly alien and uncongenial. He drained off his last cup of Dragon's Eye, then with facile cheerfulness, he murmured, "To be poor in Sianfu, that is punishment enough for any man. Why should the general waste bullets therefore?"

I felt around beneath the table for the empty shoes. A pair of feet had filled them now. All at once, Quinto rose from his chair. The general stood up beside him.

"Do we see you tomorrow?" the general asked.

I was speechless, yet I wanted to shout hysterically.

"You do not mind?" Quinto murmured, glancing at Trend's expense-book. "In the little brown book I have changed certain things. The accounting was not careful. Señor Pyramid's prices were all wrong. They did not take into consideration the inflation in China, yes?"

I watched the two of them march toward the door; Quinto leading, the general a little behind, limping slightly like a man walking on eggs.

I think the shoes were a little too tight.

THE END

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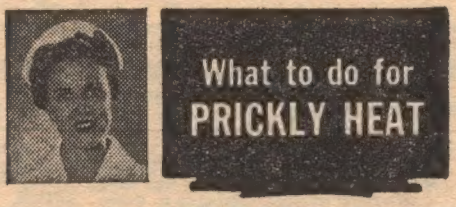


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*(Continued from page 101)*

Smith persisted. He was naked, standing on the deck, and he was arguing his head off.

"I can make it, Captain. I'll take my chances on your diving," and I chimed in, "Smith's a very strong swimmer, Captain."

What could the Old Man do? "O.K.," he yielded. "Tie a line on him and watch him carefully." Smith was already in the water.

Do you know how long it takes to swim a hundred yards in the open ocean, with a line tied around you? It takes a thousand years. I could feel myself grow old and gray. Then all together they shouted from the deck, "He made it!"

They started hauling in on the line. If that line was still tied around Smith, I commenced to be afraid we would get him back in two pieces. Overhead we heard a plane. Whoever he was, he couldn't see us any more than we could see him. Smith and Douglas came aboard. We dove. Two hundred feet of safe, sweet, salt water, we pulled up over top of *Sailfin*, and never have I been more glad to do it.

Well, this was one of those cases when we had our cake and ate it too. We made our rendezvous with the destroyer. With Douglas aboard we had four customers for the doctor. The admiral turned the whole task force around, to cover us while we made the transfer of our patients.

Just before we got in to port, about ten days later, I read over the Old Man's report. Afterwards, I got a chance to speak to Smith alone. I told him the captain was recommending him for an award. I told him, while I admired his courage, what pleased me most was how he had risen above petty, personal matters.

He grinned and answered, "Look, Jack, I had to do it. That guy is a tough enough rival while he's alive. If we had left him there to die in his rubber boat while I came safely home, he would have been unbeatable."

He was incorrigible, but all kidding aside, I think Peter Michael Smith III, had come of age on that patrol.

THE END

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